

“THE MORE, THE MERRIER”: SOCIAL CAPITAL AMONGST SMALL-SCALE FARMERS  
IN ATHENS, GEORGIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Julie Velasquez Runk)

ABSTRACT

This study takes a grower-centric perspective to investigate the degree to which social considerations drive distribution practices among food producers who distribute locally (within Athens, Georgia). Through the use of observation and semi-structured interview with small-scale farmers, the study demonstrates the importance of diverse and extensive social networks for the long-term success and viability of local food projects. It utilizes common themes from the agrofoods and social capital literatures to examine how social capital becomes manifest amongst farmers in a local food context, and to show that social relationships may be mobilized to both generate and sustain community investment in local agriculture.

INDEX WORDS: Local food, Agrofood studies, Social capital, Economic Anthropology,  
Athens, GA

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated, with much appreciation and admiration, to the food cultivators.

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Craig Page, to many you are a "knight in shining armor;" I share that sentiment that a farmer expressed during an interview.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

When I moved to Athens in May of 2007, I knew no one but was eager to have three months to familiarize myself with my new hometown before starting graduate school in the fall. I came to the University of Georgia's Department of Anthropology with the intention of studying agricultural anthropology; my interest in the intersection of culture and agriculture had developed during a recent farming internship in Hawaii that had taught me a few important things: (1) there is nothing more delicious or nutritious than something just picked, plucked, dug, pulled, or in any other way severed from the soil; (2) many people know this; (3) farmers, especially, know this, and they need for others to know it too.

Before going to Hawaii, I had worked in a small health food store in my hometown of Naples, Florida. The owner was a perhaps a little quirky, and undeniably overzealous about organics. His was, at the time, one of only two stores in the entire United States to stock only items that were 100% organic. He was a farmer himself, and much of the store's bountiful produce selection came from his and other area farms. This was something of a shock to me; although Naples is situated just twenty or so miles west of one of the most expansive tomato-growing regions in the country (operated by Monsanto, a multi-billion dollar agro-industrial corporation), Naples itself prefers to irrigate golf courses and front lawns rather than farms or vegetable gardens. At the time, it seemed pretty revolutionary to consider someone growing much of their own food and selling it to people in their community.

By the time I arrived in Athens in 2007, the concept of producing and distributing food locally made so much sense to me that I was confused about why it wasn't more

common. To get a better understanding of the distribution side of the equation, I got a job working in the bakery at a small-chain grocery, based out of Asheville, North Carolina, and emphasizing local and organic foods. I quickly realized the discrepancy between a corporate chain-grocer and myself in our definitions of local. A big tomato-shaped sticker with the word “LOCAL” proudly adorned bread from Tampa, Florida—which, at 470 miles or a full-day’s truck haul from Athens—*was* local, relatively speaking. The store also stocked grapes from Chile and apples from New Zealand at the same time that North Georgia was celebrating its annual Apple Festival in the town of Ellijay and muscadines and scuppernongs were dripping off vines all over town. I began to understand the pervasive importance of efficiency and something called “economies of scale.”

I came to understand several reasons why that store might want to *appear* local without actually being so. Increasingly, “people” (wealthy people, mostly, or people with dietary restrictions or people whose children could not eat some such common thing like wheat or soy) were seeking alternatives to regular grocery store food—the kind that is processed, chemically or genetically altered, trucked in from very far away, and/or is in some other way impure or unnatural. Some people have always wanted this sort of food, and for those people there were food coops or backyard gardens or both. But a surging demand meant that traditional supermarkets were leaving a gap in supply and intention that constituted an opportunity for alternative businesses, such as the national alternative grocery chain, Whole Foods, which endeavors to offer “the highest quality natural and organic products available” to “satisfy and delight our customers” (Whole Foods). Enter the era of local food.

The bakery that employed me the summer before graduate school was situated in one of those “emerging market” stores. The produce section was vast and colorful and the first thing customers saw when they entered the store. At the time that I worked there, to the best of my knowledge, none of that produce was grown by “local” farmers. By local, here, I mean farmers that sell at the local farmers’ market or to other local outlets—typically (but not always) producers living within 50 or so miles of Athens and growing diversified products on less than 10 acres.

I began to wonder where those farmers were, and what they were up to; this glimpse at the distribution side of the food chain—which typically consisted of large trucks, frozen and processed food, and stiff corporate oversight—made me curious about the production side of things. To learn more, I became involved with a local non-profit organization called PLACE: Promoting Local Agriculture and Cultural Experiences. The organization’s mission to promote “a strong, accessible local food culture in Athens” intrigued me. To the organization’s founder, a strong, accessible local food culture is one in which all people have access to safe and nutritious food, and one in which food producers can make a reasonable living. The organization also emphasizes the strong community bonds that can develop around food production, distribution, and consumption, and, in turn, the fact that a strong and engaged community can promote the sustained functioning of local food systems as part of a healthy local economy.

My experience with PLACE and getting to know a few local farmers led me to think more about local food and moral economy, or the interplay between cultural and moral beliefs and economic activity. Most of the local food producers I knew were well aware of the negative environmental and health effects of large-scale industrial agriculture, and many

of them farmed in opposition to that norm. Because they wanted to make a living through farming, they were also clearly interested in making it financially viable.

In getting to know some of these growers, I noticed what appeared to be a third common priority: generating what I'll refer to here as "social capital"—linkages amongst individuals that serve to generate a sense of community and facilitate mutually-advantageous social and economic relationships; social capital is the concept underlying golfing partnerships among corporate executives, the job going to the guy with "a friend of a friend" who can pull some strings, and, I argue, the unceremonious act of provisioning food to people in one's community. In that last context, I hypothesize, social capital can connect growers to their customers in meaningful ways that secure lasting relationships and, thus, greater financial security for the grower. Furthermore, I argue, the sustained viability of small-scale local agriculture will depend upon community engagement, the development of strategic alliances, and cooperation amongst networks of producers and the larger community of which they are an integral part.

Through talking with local producers in Athens, Georgia, I noticed tremendous diversity in how farmers sold their goods, that is, in their market portfolios. I began to wonder to what extent the Athens area local food producers were involved in the raising and selling of food not simply for their environmental commitment or their need for income, but also because it helped to build community and to generate social capital. I developed this research to examine the role of social capital in the Athens area local food movement.

Specifically, I asked:

- 1) Do farmers' see their food production in something other than environmental and economic terms?

- 2) Do farmers' market portfolios, that is, where they sell their products, relate solely to economic returns, or does social capital have a role?
- 3) Do concepts from social capital help to explain the viability of small-scale agricultural production and distribution?

In order to investigate these questions, I had to first familiarize myself with academic writing about local foods and social capital. Chapter 2 of this thesis presents theoretical overviews of both literatures to determine relevant linkages between the two, and to demonstrate the spaces in which to situate my ethnographic research. Relevant and overlapping themes include notions of trust and solidarity for mutual gain, community and collaboration, resistance and resilience. I will consider these themes as the theoretical framework that grounds my investigation of small-scale producers in the particular context of Athens, Georgia.

In Chapters 3 through 5, I test the utility of social capital theory in a presentation of ethnographic research involving three separate local food initiatives and the farmers that engage them. In Chapter 3, I present a description of the research area and a history of its local food initiatives. This serves to situate the research in both time and space, and provides a working base upon which to examine the results. In Chapter 4, I overview the research methods—semi-structured interview and observation—in detail, and I introduce a heuristic framework through which to analyze the results. Finally, in Chapter 5, I present results of the research, and discuss how it contributes to current discourse in agrofood studies and social capital theory. I conclude, in Chapter 6, with a section on lessons learned and avenues for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Situating local food projects: a review of the agrofoods literature**

Internationally, advocates of “food systems localization” are proclaiming a commitment to “environmental sustainability” and “social justice” (Allen and Hinrichs 2007; Allen et al 2003). The “local food movement” has taken many forms and goes by many names: Allen et al (2003) speak of *alternative food initiatives*; Goodman (2003) and Watts et al. (2005) write about *alternative agro-food networks and systems*; Ilbery and Kneafsey (1998) refer to the *quality ‘turn’* toward localized agriculture; Renting et al (2003) advocate *shortened food supply chains*. The varied ways in which food relocalization initiatives have been conceptualized is fairly dizzying.

Despite the breadth of the agrofoods literature, there are a few common threads that are helpful for situating food localization projects within the context of a social capital theoretical framework; in spite of the varied ways in which food system localization has been described, articulated, and operationalized, the literature reveals a common emphasis on localization as a means of revitalizing local economies and establishing strong community connections. A prominent manifestation of this vision is the concept of “civic agriculture.”

Thomas Lyson (2004) defines “civic agriculture” as a “sustainable alternative to the socially, economically and environmentally destructive practices” of conventional industrial agriculture (1). Unlike industrial agriculture, Lyson argues, civic agriculture draws on notions of economy that incorporate social relations, cultural and environmental history, and



local politics into agricultural production and distribution. Lyson invokes the local-global binary not to instigate opposition but to highlight the differences between certain elements in each production system. Industrial agriculture, in Lyson's understanding, relies upon large-scale production at multiple sites connected in a global trade network to consumers all over the world. The "economies of scale" afforded by such a large-scale production system render obsolete the small-scale intensive production occurring on "smallholder" farms in the United States and elsewhere; however, Lyson argues, when smallholders produce for local consumption, they increase "community capital" by contributing directly to the local economy and to the social and physical health of its members.

Robert Netting (1993) has contributed greatly to theory related to smallholder livelihoods in the face of emerging industrial agriculture. He argues that even as industrialized, large-scale agriculture becomes ubiquitous across the global landscape, small-scale farmers offer an alternative agriculture that is sustainable and viable over the long term. Netting cautions against equating "modernization" in agriculture with progress, arguing that the industrial model is technically limited, energetically inefficient, environmentally destructive, and socially costly. Smallholder systems, on the other hand, provide an opportunity for farmers to establish economic security and maintain sovereignty over production processes. Netting also points out that small-scale agriculture is more productive, per acre, than large-scale extensive agriculture, offering a high rate of return to farmers and their consumers. For these reasons, and owing to what he perceives to be an unsustainable future for industrial agriculture, Netting concludes, "the practical and coherent smallholder system...may be more vital and necessary to *our* future than we realize" (1993:334).

Although discourses surrounding “alternative” approaches to food and farming often imply a stark stance *against* conventional modes of production and distribution, Hinrichs distinguishes between approaches that emphasize opposition and those that emphasize “civic renewal and redemocratization” (2007:6). The civic agriculture approach, posited most notably by Lyson (2000, 2003, 2005, 2007) and DeLind (2002) takes the latter course, by highlighting the problem-solving capacity of locally-organized systems, which are “characterized by networks of producers who are bound together by place” (Lyson 2005: 92). Civic agricultural enterprises, which rely primarily upon social relationships and communal approaches to food production, can contribute to community health and vitality by promoting “agricultural literacy” and local economic vitality (DeLind 2002). Proponents of civic agriculture argue that raising awareness about the ways in which food is produced and distributed is crucial for developing devoted “food citizens” who are eager to actively engage “in food-related behaviors that support...the development of a democratic, socially and economically just, and environmentally sustainable food system” (Wilkins 2004:269). So while civic agriculture arises in the literature as an encouraging alternative to conventional agricultural practices, Lyson (2007) acknowledges that it has always operated alongside, rather than instead of, that dominant food system.

Clare Hinrichs (2007) identifies a second major approach to localizing food systems, which draws heavily from discourses of social resistance and social mobilization. In this vein, authors promote a range of “subversive” practices, ranging from the fairly docile (growing some of one’s own food) (Halweil 2002; Pollan 2008) to the arguably more radical (“rescuing” food from the waste stream and reimagining it as nutrients) (Katz 2006). In the vein of social resistance, Stevenson and colleagues (2007) promote different types of “work”

that individuals can contribute toward changing the food system. *Warrior* work involves a resistance towards “corporate food”; *builder* work entails the creation of new agrofood initiatives and models; and *weaver* work includes the development of strategic and conceptual linkages for engaging diverse interests in food-related advocacy and action (2007: 42-43).

Although oppositional discourses emerge to varying degrees within food-system localization initiatives, there appears to be common recognition of the industrial-globalized machine against which they are situated. As Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) point out, however, the global food system is comprised of “efficiencies” that often allow points of entry for enterprising advocates of alternative food systems. Changing food fads, culturally and regionally-specific preferences, and the difficulty of maintaining consumer trust and loyalty (especially in the wake of food-borne illnesses and contamination) are all weaknesses of large-scale production and distribution processes. Alternative systems can capitalize on those weaknesses by basing themselves on “authentic relationships that have social and ecological components,” rather than economic considerations alone (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002: 361).

The “authentic relationships” to which Hendrickson and Heffernan refer are distinct manifestations of social capital as presented in the second part of this chapter. Within the agrofood literature, a number of authors refer to empirical studies that demonstrate the positive effect of small-scale agricultural enterprises on local communities. One commonly cited study is that of Walter Goldshmidt (1978), who utilized a comparative community framework to demonstrate the relative effects of large-scale corporate farming versus small-scale sustainable agriculture on quality of life (Lyson 2007; Brodt et al 2006). Goldshmidt

attributed his findings—demonstrably greater quality of life in the small-scale agricultural community—to worker exploitation and a lack of ability to control one’s destiny in the corporately-controlled agricultural community (Lyson 2007). Similarly, Tolbert and colleagues’ comparative study of different-sized firms (of many types, including farms) demonstrated that smaller firms typically foster civic engagement because they tend to be “anchored to place by social and economic relationships” (1998: 404).

Similarly, Flora’s (1995) longitudinal comparative study of eight northern Great Plains communities over five years revealed a striking increase in social capital (measured in strength and diversity of network connections) as communities transitioned to small-scale sustainable agriculture. Flora attributed increased social capital primarily to a sense of empowerment, by which “community citizens and farmers both begin to see that their action...can make a difference in achieving goals” (1995: 242).

The eminence of human agency as a primary determinant of individual and community well-being is not lost on other writers of agrofoods literature. In their examination of producer-consumer relationships and priorities in a “local” food system in Washington state, Selfa and Quazi (2005) emphasize the importance, to both producers and consumers, of social relationships, transparency in food production, and ability to select food items that were desirable and affordable. Their study demonstrates the degree to which choosing “local” is part of a complex set of decision-making processes in which both producers and consumers engage when they plant, sell, cook or eat.

### *Local food in popular culture*

While academic writing on local food has surged in recent years (Figure 2-1), popular writing and media on food-related issues has exploded. A search on Amazon.com, the world's largest online book retailer, for titles related to "local food" yielded 27,660 results; "organic food" yielded 17,372 titles, and "sustainable agriculture" pulled up 8,659 books (Amazon.com).

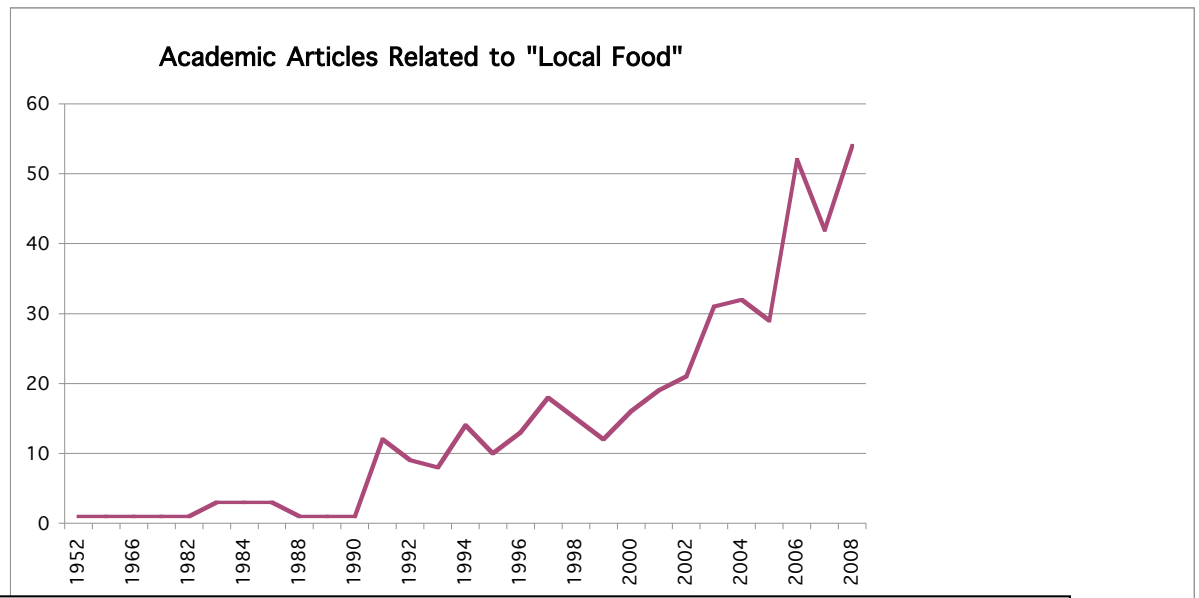


Figure 2-1: Content analysis of "local food" in academic writing in the social sciences (SOURCE: ISI Web of Knowledge)

In 2006—a particularly eventful year for local food activism in Athens—four books were released that would propel food issues into the mainstream. Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* highlighted the impossibility of discovering "where our food comes from" when it is produced and distributed according to conventional industrial methods (Pollan 2006). Similar in scope and purpose was Samuel Fromartz's *Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew* (2006). The book exposed and investigated the commodification of organic foods by comparing and contrasting mass-

produced organics with smaller-scale local agriculture, thus assisting in the promotion of “local” over organic. In *The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter*, Peter Singer and Jim Mason focused on the ethics of eating by exploring who is affected, and in what ways, by Americans’ food choices (Singer and Mason 2006). Again, the authors urged transparency in the food system; the implications of our food choices, they argued, are intentionally shrouded by the industrial food complex. Localized food systems, on the other hand, allow producers and consumers to work for mutual benefit. Finally, the title says it all in Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson’s *Chew on This: Everything You Don’t Want to Know About Fast Food* (2006). In an effort to mimic the industry under scrutiny, the book was intended to appeal to young readers by using straight-talk and simple prose to present an intriguing (and disturbing) depiction of the darker side of fast-food’s convenience and wide appeal.

The popular reception of these books paralleled a surge in local food initiatives nationwide. The Slow Food movement, which began in Italy as a response to the threat of losing treasured food traditions in the wake of globalized fast-food, expanded into the United States and elsewhere, where it fomented interest in linking “the pleasure of food with a commitment to community and the environment” (Slow Food USA). Currently, there are more than 200 local Slow Food chapters around the United States, with a combined membership of over 18,000 people, that are working hard to move Slow Food out of the elite “foodie” realm that it has traditionally occupied to focus more on social issues such as food insecurity and justice for food-industry workers (McCandlish 2009).

Around the same time that Slow Food was becoming a popular movement and philosophy in metropolitan areas in the United States, the number of farmers’ markets increased nationwide by 18 percent, from 3,706 in 2004 to 4,385 in 2006 (USDA-AMS

Marketing Services Division). By the time the last agricultural census was conducted (2007), 12,549 farms in the United States reported marketing products through a community supported agriculture (CSA) arrangement (USDA National Agricultural Library). Although the USDA did not collect data on CSA prior to 2007, the national organization Local Harvest reports that there were only about fifty CSA operations in the United States in 1990 (representing a 24,998% increase in less than twenty years!) (Local Harvest). The next section on social capital situates these trends in both popular culture and academic interest within the context of community development and interpersonal relationships.

### **Social capital: A brief overview**

“Social capital” has been so widely utilized and variously defined within the social sciences that its conceptual utility and novelty have been called into question (Portes and Landolt 2000, Sandefur and Laumann 1998, Fine 2001). This analysis and study seek to challenge the utility of this popular concept by putting it to work in a specialized context. This section will provide an historical and theoretical overview of the social capital concept, with critique of some relevant elements.

#### *Seminal perspectives: Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam*

While the notion of social capital may be traced at least as far back as de Tocqueville’s (1835) characterization of the American propensity for civil engagement as an “art of association” (Fukuyama 2001:8), the concept did not take off widely in scholarly discourse until the late 1980s. Since that time, three sociologists have been largely responsible for the popularization of social capital as means for measuring the “goodwill” (Adler and Kwon 2002), “trust” (Fukuyama 1995, Bourdieu 1986 ), and “solidarity” (Putnam

1994) contained within a group of people. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is heavily cited as the primary progenitor of the social capital concept as it is currently conceived (Halpern 2005, Lin 2001, Schuller et al 2000, Portes 2000). Bourdieu (1986) identifies multiple capitals that serve to enhance an individual's social standing, access to resources, and general welfare. While economic or financial capital is just one of these, Bourdieu argues that all forms of capital are derived from and contribute to economic capital. Two primary capitals Bourdieu discusses are social and cultural. Social capital is the resources that are grounded in durable exchange-based personal-social networks. In the context of local-food system research, social capital relates to established social and exchange linkages between producers and consumers and among producers. The concept of social capital may also be applied to local organizations or activist groups associated with food-system localization projects.

Bourdieu (1986) divides cultural capital into three distinct states, each having particular relevance to the proposed research; the *embodied state* of cultural capital refers to long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body (such as the need or desire for nourishing food); the *objectified state* refers to tangible cultural goods (such as community food assessments, recorded histories, and strategic plans); the *institutionalized state* refers to institutions (such as education and community outreach) that confer unique opportunities or entitlements.

Central to Bourdieu's conception of social capital is the notion that an individual's stock of social capital depends largely on the size and durability of the network of which he or she is a part (Lin 2001). According to Bourdieu's framework, social capital is produced (and maintained) by the members of a particular group; as group size increases, Bourdieu



argues, individual group members are able to access the resources of more people, thus increasing their “stock” of social capital (Bourdieu 1986).

Coleman (1988), however, defines social capital as resources contained within a social structure, rather than within individuals themselves. For Coleman, social capital’s greatest conceptual contribution lies in its ability to bridge what he perceives to be a great divide between social and economic explanations for human action. Both of these “intellectual streams,” Coleman argues, are overly simplistic, since individual actors are clearly not shaped entirely by either their social environments or their rational self-interest. *Social capital* effectively combines the relevant arguments from both models to arrive at an understanding of human activity in which “social capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to the actor” (Coleman 1988: S98).

Coleman identifies three general forms of social capital. The first is manifest in obligations, expectations and trustworthiness of structures. This refers to generalized forms of reciprocity and generosity. The second manifestation of social capital is in information channels, which facilitate the flow of capital amongst members of a group. Finally, norms and effective sanctions both facilitate and constrain certain social actions by clearly establishing expected social behavior.

Of particular importance to Coleman’s theorization of social capital is the notion that social groups are bounded, and that *closure* around a particular social network serves to intensify the social capital contained within that network. Closed or *bounded* networks facilitate solidarity amongst group members by providing reliable communication channels and sanctions that make trusting other people in the network less risky (Coleman 1988). Coleman argues that social capital is spontaneously created in dense networks “in which

everyone is connected such that no one can escape the notice of others,” suggesting a functionalist understanding of how and why social capital is generated. In other words, Coleman seems to argue that social capital arises within a bounded community to serve very specific functions, such as instilling trust, reducing crime, and maintaining norms (Coleman 1988). One element of this functionalist representation is the proposition that social capital is distinguishable from other forms of capital by its *public goods* aspect, by which individuals who generate capital may benefit *less* than the social group to which they belong. Coleman relies upon this claim in his call to “young people with greater social capital” who may be needed to fill the voids left by waning social institutions (such as traditional family and civic institutions).

An observation of these waning institutions is precisely what led Robert Putnam (1993, 1995, 1996, 2002) to investigate the generation and deterioration of social capital within groups and nations. In “Bowling Alone” (1995) and “Who killed civic America?” (1996), Putnam reviews survey data that indicate a sharp decline in civic engagement and social capital in the United States between the 1970s and the 1990s. For his purposes, Putnam defines social capital as “features of social life-networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (1995). Putnam argues that such participation enables individuals to live longer, happier, and more fulfilling lives. Because of what he perceives to be obvious benefits of “social trust” and civic engagement, Putnam questions “the mystery” of their decline (measured in terms of group memberships and sense of trust) in the United States in recent years. He ultimately attributes this decline to a number of factors, including greater work demands, a new generation accustomed to the drone and dazzle of continuous access to some form of media [“the culprit

is television” (1996:10)], and notions of democracy which do not include an emphasis on “collective deliberation” (Putnam 1993:5).

Despite the relevance of Putnam’s arguments and findings to this project, it is important to note that social capital decline is neither universal nor complete; indeed, Putnam concedes, “American civil society is not moribund” (Putnam 1996:2). As the previous section on local food initiatives and activism demonstrates, challenges to the means in which food is produced and distributed are a case in point of the vitality of civic engagement in some sectors.

#### *Controversies in social capital: a few clarifications*

As may be expected of a theory so widely conceived and variously applied, there are a number of controversies surrounding the notion of social capital and its contribution to social theory. The first of these is whether social capital should be considered a private or a public good. Inherent in this debate is a consideration of how, where, why and for whom social capital is generated. Secondly, theorists debate the relative utility of closed, densely-woven networks versus open ones for generating social capital. Thirdly, there are a number of functionalist explanations for the utility of social capital to individuals and groups, although some argue that social capital arises spontaneously and should not be explained according to reductionist or functionalist reasoning. Finally, there is great debate about how to measure social capital in a variety of contexts. The following sections will address each of these controversies in turn.

### *A private or a public good?*

There is much debate as to how capital is generated and maintained, and whether, thereby, it is stored in individuals or in groups; in other words, is it a controversy in terms to speak of a particular person having a large quantity of social capital?

Portes (2000) argues that social capital may be studied and measured at both the individual and the community levels. Others, who consider social capital a public good (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1994), argue that communities are the relevant domains of analysis. In fact, Coleman argues, studying individuals may be misleading, as “the actor or actors who generate social capital ordinarily capture only a small part of its benefits” (1988:S119). Putnam takes the idea a step farther by proclaiming social capital “a public good...underprovided by private agents” (1994:10). In this conceptualization, not only are individuals not the primarily beneficiaries of social capital; neither are they the primary producers. Thus arises a notion of social capital that is emergent, *sui generis*, and spontaneous.

On the other hand, Lin (2001) identifies social capital’s capacity to generate profit for the individual. He argues that individuals invest in social relations to capture the embedded resources that will generate a return (Lin 2001:21). Similarly, Fukuyama refers to these “embedded resources” as products of cooperation, which, he argues, enable individuals to pursue “their selfish ends” (2001:8). This perspective—that individuals operating within social networks utilize cooperation as a strategy for achieving personal goals—leads Fukuyama to reason that individuals produce social capital “as a private good” (2001:8). Halpern adds that the personal benefit to be accrued through strong social relationships is

evident and “provides a rude awakening to those who would view social capital in purely public good terms” (2005:23).

Whether or not social capital should be considered a public good is a worthy debate. As the present research will indicate, social capital—as realized in the context of local food—provides benefit both to individual producers and to the larger community of which they are a part. In this particular instance, social capital should not be characterized as exclusively a public or a private good, nor as entirely conscious or entirely spontaneous; this research will indicate that social capital may be enlisted by individuals pursuing their own best interest (“private good”), but can result in scenarios that are beneficial to the greater communities to which those individuals belong (“public good”). In considering producers’ reasons for participating in a local food system, and for choosing certain distribution methods, I was interested in investigating the extent to which they perceived their participation contributed to the public good.

### ***Closed or open networks?***

A second debate within social capital theory addresses the relative benefits of closed versus open social networks. Granovetter (1974, 1983) argues that open networks—characterized by “weak ties” that allow a flow of information and resources between groups—afford greater social capital than closed networks. While strong ties connect like-minded individuals, weak ties are “bridges” that diffuse information across diverse groups (Granovetter 1974:1363). Granovetter uses the concept of “tie strength” to demonstrate that the degree of closeness between individuals is often an important determinant of social capital. His argument for the “strength of weak ties” is grounded in evidence of successful

job-seekers who benefit from diverse relationships across a variety of social networks (Granovetter 1983).

Burt (2001) presents a similar argument in his description of “structural holes.” These “holes” (akin to Granovetter’s “bridges”) “create a competitive advantage” for individuals whose relationships span them and benefit from the resources of other groups (Burt 2001:34). Halpern also mentions “strategic alliances” between firms that share information and create opportunities for developing joint products (2005:54). This characterization is particularly interesting when applied to the context of distinct farmers working within a particular market.

Conversely, Coleman’s (1988) argument for “closure” suggests that social capital is generated when individuals form tightly bound networks grounded in trust and solidarity. According to Coleman, it is strong intra-network ties, rather than weak inter-network bridges, that enable social opportunity and the development of advantageous relationships. Furthermore, as Lin points out, “not all bridges (or network locations) lead to better information, social credentials or reinforcement” (2001:13). Bridges may, in effect, encourage individuals to defect from one group and to join another.

In the context of the initiatives studied presently, it may be helpful to consider that closed and open networks generate *different forms* of social capital that facilitate distinct opportunities and accrue distinct advantages. The degree to which networks are open or closed also depends largely upon how a network is conceptually bounded. For example, if farms are conceived as entities within a network of farmers, it may be challenging to perceive a benefit of a closed network; farmers need a market for their product, which nearly always necessitates bridging relationships to networks of consumers through particular market

linkages. If, however, the network is conceived at the community-level, there may be valid support for the argument of a closed network, in which strong relationships between farmers, consumers, and market managers serve to generate social and economic capital for the benefit of numerous community groups.

The debate surrounding the relative benefit of closed versus open networks leads to a third element of social capital theory: what is the function of social capital? The literature lacks consensus on this question.

### ***Functionalist explanations?***

While some theorists, such as Robert Putnam (1993, 1994) highlight the spontaneous or emergent nature of social capital, others see social capital as something that individuals and groups consciously employ to gratify specific needs. Fukuyama speaks to the function of social capital in a free-market democracy, where strong social connections can serve to reduce the transaction costs “of formal coordination mechanisms” (2001:8). Halpern elaborates on this argument by demonstrating the benefit of social capital in a market context, where social capital represents the flow of information connecting buyers and sellers (2005:4). When most effective, Halpern argues, social capital facilitates an easy flow of information, thus reducing the need for formal sanctions (which may be timely and expensive).

The present research indicates the benefits of strong social ties in facilitating exchange of information and resources among farmers and between farmers and their customers. The three initiatives, described in the following chapter, all serve to reduce the “transaction costs” associated with marketing and distributing goods at the local level.

### *How to measure?*

Fukuyama (2001) offers a number of ways in which social capital may be measured, but is guarded in his presentation of each. Censuses of groups and group memberships may be helpful, although it may be difficult to quantify within-group cohesiveness, or the ways in which group members relate to outsiders.

Survey data is another popular source for measuring levels of trust and civic engagement. Coleman questions the value of future application of quantitative research methods to social capital theory, conceding that social capital's value may be revealed primarily by qualitative research that examines social systems' constitution and functioning (Coleman 1990:304-305).

While the present research relies on qualitative methods for investigating social capital, there are a number of emerging quantitative techniques, particularly in the area of social network analysis, that have proven effective for measuring social capital in individuals and groups. These techniques range from fairly simple to highly involved, and could prove useful to a longer-term analysis than was feasible in the present study.

### *Situating social capital*

Ellis (2000) considers multiple capitals as assets that buffer individuals and groups in times of shock or crisis. Ellis's characterization of assets as determinants of rural livelihood strategies is relevant to an examination of local food systems, which rely on a strong local agricultural base for their success. Measurements of "natural capital" (land, water and other biological resources), "human capital" (labor, skill, education and health), "social capital" (community relationships, reciprocity and trust, moral economy), and financial capital are helpful for demonstrating the progress (or stagnation) of local food economies. Ellis also



considers mediating factors, such as culture, history, politics, climate, demography, and economic trends, as well as existing institutions and organizations, that affect the stock of assets available to individuals and communities. These factors should certainly be considered as relevant to the proposed research; it would be fallacious to attempt a study of a particular economic system without first considering the complex and varied landscapes in which that system is situated.

### **Research Questions**

While farmers have many diverse and unique reasons for choosing to farm, and for choosing to market their product in a particular way and to a particular niche, the consistent demonstration of social considerations in farming practice substantially informs the present study. After studying both the local foods and social capital literatures, I recognized several areas of theoretical overlap that could inform my research and analysis. Figure 2-1 depicts the conceptual framework in which that analysis is situated. Overlapping concepts—collaboration, community, resistance and resilience—constitute the conceptual territory that grounds this research.

As Selfa and Qazi (2005) point out, small-scale farmers often rely upon niche or specialized markets for promoting and distributing their product. Holloway and colleagues (2007) consider the importance of producer-consumer interaction for establishing dynamic relationships that both configure and conform to particular food projects. Considering the insights offered throughout the literature, and the diverse market structure in which this particular group of local producers operates, this research addresses three major questions:

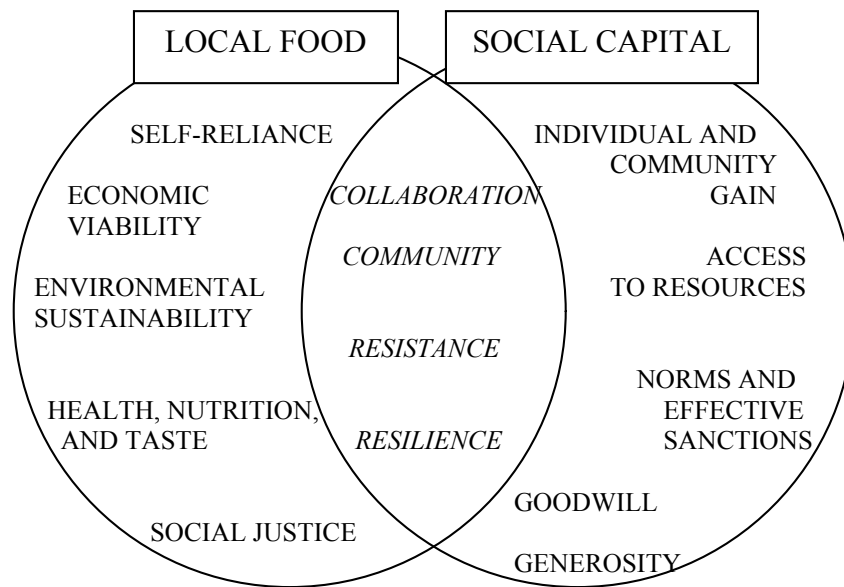


Figure 2-2: Concept bubbles for local food and social capital

- 1) Do farmers' see their food production in something other than environmental and economic terms?
- 2) Do farmers' market portfolios, that is, where they sell their products, relate solely to economic returns, or does social capital have a role?
- 3) Do concepts from social capital help to explain the viability of small-scale agricultural production and distribution?

As the next several chapters will demonstrate, a diversified market structure reliant upon social networks that connect producers with consumers and to one another is essential for providing both social and economic security for farmers. The next chapter will examine the particular diversified market structure in Athens, GA to demonstrate the co-constitutive nature of markets and producer-consumer needs.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH SITE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

#### **Description of the study area: Athens, Georgia**

Athens is a vibrant college town, home to Georgia's oldest and largest university (The University of Georgia) and possessing a culturally and economically diverse population and a long and somewhat tortured agricultural history. Both literally and metaphorically, the university campus sits at the heart of downtown, contributing to an atmosphere that is at once academic and prone to revelry. More than thirty bars dominate the small but lively downtown, and serve as encouraging venues for Athens' many aspiring (and some tried and true) musicians. Despite pockets of affluence, the neighborhoods surrounding downtown are marked by one of the highest rates of poverty in the state. While part of the unusually high poverty rate (28.6%, or twice the average for the state of Georgia) can be attributed to the student population, surprisingly, students do not account for much; according to a recent (2006) study conducted by a local non-profit, Partners for a Prosperous Athens, the county's *non-student* poverty rate is still remarkably high: 23.5% (Partners for a Prosperous Athens).

Table 3-1: Demographic profile of Athens and the State of Georgia

|  | <b>Athens/Clarke County</b>                         | <b>Georgia</b>      |
|--|---|---------------------|
| Population                             | 114,063 (includes students; UGA enrollment: 32,938) | 9,544,750           |
| Population density (persons/sq. mile)  | 838.8   | 141.4               |
| Size (approximate)                     | 122 square miles                                    | 57,906 square miles |
| Median Age                             | 24.7  | 34.8                |
| Median household income                | \$36,158  | \$49,080            |
| Persons below poverty (%)              | 28.6%   | 14.3%               |
| Bachelor's degree or higher            | 39.8%   | 24.3%               |
| % Change in number of farms, 1997-2002 | + 5.1%  | -.1%                |

(Source: US Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/13059.html>)

Athens is situated in the Piedmont region in the northeastern part of the state (Figure 3-1). Athens-Clarke County has the smallest area of Georgia's 159 counties. The University of Georgia has a strong presence in the community; it is the largest employer in the county, and just under 30% of the county's 114,063 residents are university students, which contributes to a median age of 24.7, or ten years younger than the median age for the rest of Georgia (Table 3-1).

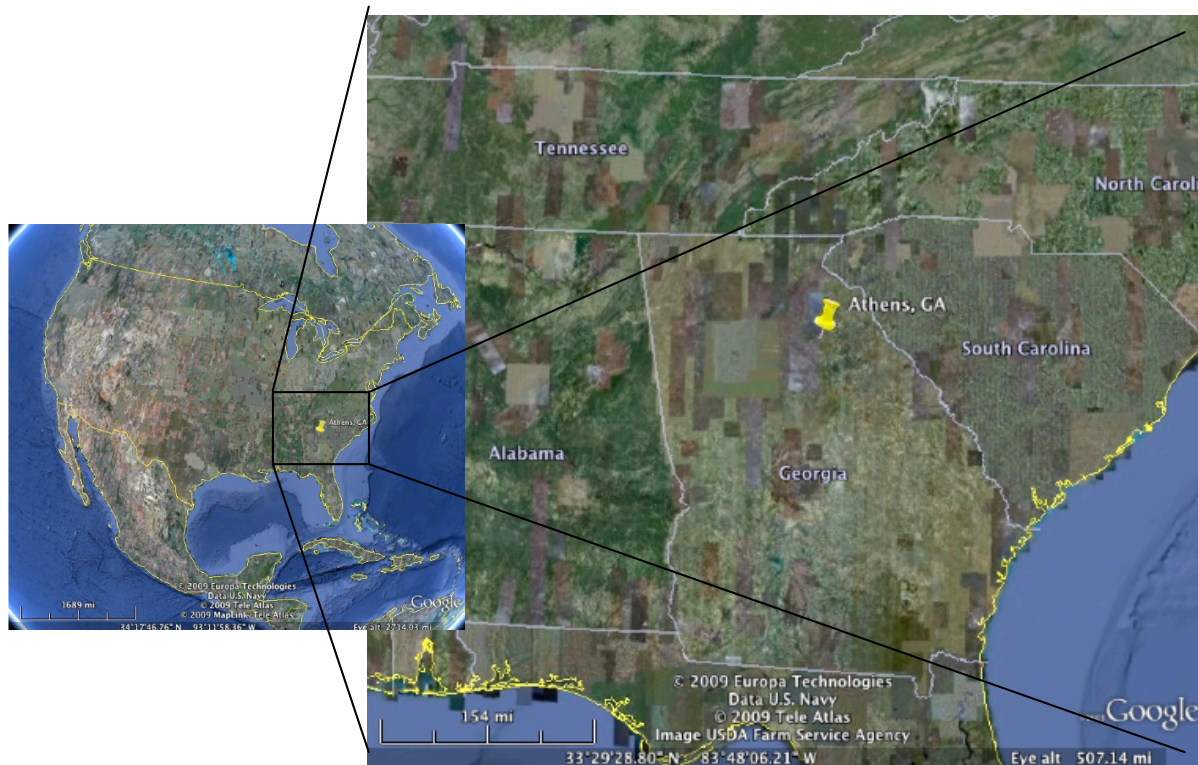


Figure 3-1: Location of research site

The University has also contributed to a diverse culture that supports a broad range of political and religious perspectives, although Athens is generally considered to be a pocket of liberalism nestled amongst traditional Southern conservatism. In the 2008 presidential election, Republican candidate John McCain beat out Democrat Barak Obama by a wide margin in Georgia: 52% of the votes were for McCain and 46.9% for Obama. In Clarke

County, however, just 33.6% of the votes went to McCain, while Obama took 64.8%. (Figure 3-2).

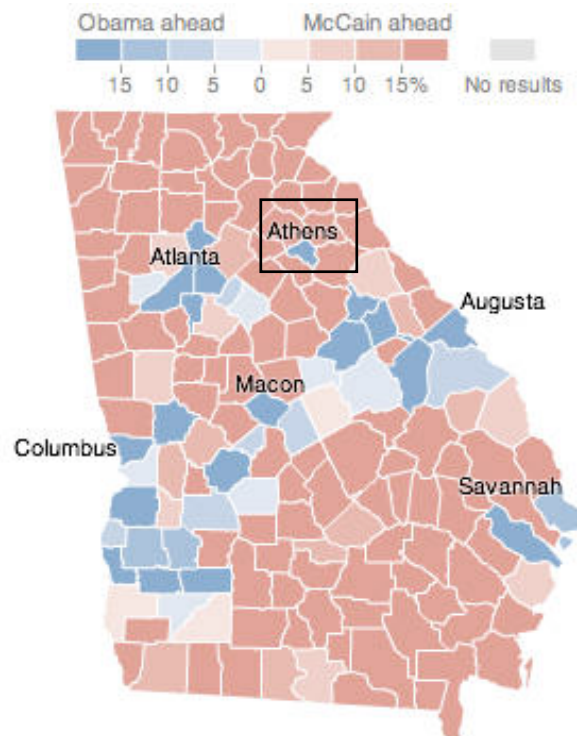


Figure 3-2: Georgia: U.S. Presidential Election results, 2008  
Source: The New York Times  
<http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/states/president/georgia.html>

The rural areas surrounding Athens have a long agricultural history, supported mostly by a booming and environmentally destructive cotton industry that earned Georgia its reputation as “the King of Cotton” (Bonner 1964). Despite the deleterious effect that cotton had on Georgia’s soil, agriculture remains the most important sector of the state’s economy; in 2006, Georgia ranked first nationally in production of broilers, cucumbers, peanuts, and squash; second in rye and snap beans; and third in a number of other fresh vegetables (Abbe and Messner 2006). There is a wide range in the type and scale of agriculture practiced in Georgia; of the state’s 49,311 farms, approximately 39% are “small” (fewer than fifty acres),

about half are “medium-sized” (between 50 and 500 acres), and a little over eight percent are larger than 500 acres (USDA Census of Agriculture 2002). The state has a relatively diverse agricultural profile, although it is unclear from census data what percentage of state agricultural production remains in-state. Proponents of more localized food systems strive to make distribution systems more transparent and encourage local consumption rather than production for export.

Despite the central importance of agriculture to Georgia’s economy, less than two percent of Georgia’s citizens live and work on farms. The average age of farmers in the state is 59, and the agricultural population has seen a steady decline, except in the category of smallest farms (those under 9 acres) (Abbe and Messner 2006). The growth of small-scale agriculture in the state corresponds with an emerging activist movement geared toward the development of a strong local economy based on family-owned or small scale agricultural and business initiatives.

### **The Local Food Movement in Athens, Georgia**

When the Athens Farmers Market opened on May 17, 2008, vendors were so under-prepared for the massive turnout that most had sold out an hour or two after the 2,600 eager customers swept through the market. The bakery-stall sold 400 loaves of bread in under an hour. By 9:00 a.m, an hour after the market’s opening, several farmers were left with nothing but a few bunches of kale and cut flowers to accompany their excitement. Many farmers assured empty-handed customers that they’d bring twice as much next week; if she’d known there would be such demand, one farmer noted, she would have harvested lots more of

everything. One farmer, who had been growing vegetables and milling grain with his wife for years, commented that with crowds like that, “Now I can *really* farm!”

The overwhelming success of opening day demonstrated profoundly—to farmers, market-organizers, market-goers and anyone who read the local newspaper the following day—that Athens, Georgia’s local food movement had truly taken off. It was evident that many customers had been waiting a long time for “a real farmers’ market” to open in Athens; many arrived clutching an ambitious number of canvas bags, but were not dismayed at having to leave that first market without having filled even one. For people who made the trip to the market that day, it was a manifestation of ideas of community and sustainability, and constituted an opportunity for individuals to engage with one another and with people who do the noble work of growing food. For the farmers who had committed to coming to the market each Saturday until Thanksgiving, the success of opening day was more than encouraging; it enabled them to realistically entertain dreams of earning a living through growing food.

#### *A brief history of local food initiatives*

Athens’ large student population and progressive social and political tendencies made it particularly well-suited for the development of an energetic and successful local food movement. In Athens, as elsewhere, the local food movement was characterized by increased interest in food related issues, and a greater demand for transparency all along the “food chain”—from production and processing to marketing and distribution. Although the first several years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century marked this transition in a variety of cultural and social manifestations throughout the country, in Athens, 2006 was a particularly eventful year for

local food and its' champions. In the fall of that year, an undergraduate from the University of Georgia began developing a local-food awareness organization as part of a project for a speech-communications course called "The Rhetoric of Social Movements." For that student, Craig Page, food seemed like a good place to situate a social movement because food's production, distribution and consumption require a diverse array of individuals with different histories and priorities, and because all people, everywhere, relate to and interact with food in culturally and individually specific ways (Holtzman 2006). For those reasons, Page started an organization called "PLACE: Promoting Local Agriculture and Cultural Experience" with the mission of promoting a strong and accessible local food culture in Athens, Georgia. One of Page's and the organization's primary missions was to establish a farmers' market in Athens. Although a number of local farmers, restaurant owners and chefs, teachers, and other community members had been concerned with the provenance and quality of their food for years, there was still no consistent and sizeable farmers' market to meet their demands.

In 1948, the Georgia Department of Agriculture purchased a few acres just outside of downtown Athens for use as a State Farmers' Market. The building, which served truck farmers from throughout the Southeast rather than small-scale organic growers until 1999, is now the site for Athens Locally Grown's weekly drop-off and pick-up (Aued 2009). During the 1990s, a weekly farmers' market, organized and run by a local group from the Georgia Master Gardeners Association, utilized a parking lot across from the City Hall building downtown, until the annual advent of football season tailgating parties reclaimed the lot each fall. During that era, there were only a handful of small-scale organic growers in the area, and they found it difficult to compete with the "old-timey" conventional farmers who came to sell at the same market. The College Avenue market lasted only a few years. By 2000, a



few of the organic growers had begun selling produce in the courtyard of a local café, then called Big City Bread. These growers were a diverse mix of experienced and aspiring farmers, and although there were usually only five or six farmers selling, the weekly market at Big City Bread was a convenient venue for facilitating the informal flow of information and ideas between farmers.

By 2007, popular interest in local foods was manifest in Athens by an increased demand for “a real farmers’ market.” As a university town, Athens is often compared to other towns of similar size and possessing a similarly progressive personality. Many people, coming to Athens from other parts of the country, questioned Athens’ lack of a substantial and consistent farmers’ market, especially considering the swaths of agricultural land surrounding the city. In early 2008, Page’s organization, PLACE, responded to these inquiries by teaming up with local small-scale farmers and local government officials to find an appropriate location for establishing the sort of market that community members were demanding. After much discussion, the group settled on Bishop Park, a multi-use park owned and maintained by the county.

At the same time that Craig Page was working with farmers to establish a market that satisfied consumer demand, other local organizations were emerging to address other food-related issues in Athens-Clarke County. In 2006, Slow Food Athens and the Athens Food Policy Council organized to promote, respectively, the taste and culture of local food and issues related to food access and food security. In 2007, professors and students from the Geography department at the University of Georgia formed the Athens Urban Food Collective and began growing food on the roof of their academic building, to be donated to a local anti-hunger organization. The mere existence of these numerous organizations

demonstrates the burgeoning interest in and commitment to food-related priorities in Athens in recent years. The following section will describe in detail three market initiatives that have responded to that interest and commitment by providing farmers with diverse opportunities to market and distribute their products.

### **Diversified market structure: A description of current local food initiatives**

The distribution of local food in Athens occurs primarily through the three market models described below. In addition to the three primary models that are the focus of this study, farmers may sometimes seek out alternate or complementary markets for their products, such as restaurants or grocers, and may often diversify their distribution by utilizing a combination of these markets.

#### *Athens Farmers' Market*

The Athens Farmers' Market (AFM) opened in May of 2008 with the expressed intent of providing “an environment to enhance the production and marketing of local and sustainable farm products, local handmade arts and crafts, and local artisan value-added products in the Athens Area, and to stimulate the public interest in the consumption of these products” (Athens Farmers Market). The market adheres to high standards of quality and precise definitions of “local” and “sustainable,” selling only products that are produced within 100 miles of Athens by growers who commit to “Naturally Grown” standards, which prohibit the use of chemical inputs. Vendors wishing to sell for an entire season are required to become members of the market, establishing their commitment to show up each week and to abide by the standards of quality set by the Board of Directors. Vendors wishing to sell

only occasionally are still expected to submit an application for review by the board, and pay a \$15 per diem fee for use of a market tent and space.

The AFM website provides detailed information on the objective, missions, and functioning guidelines of the AFM, as well as a weekly-updated list of vendors, sponsors, and events occurring at the market. The board members' decision to provide transparent access (via the website) to its by-laws and guiding principles is consistent with its stated desire to facilitate open and honest communication about the people and processes that coalesce each week at the market. As indicated in its "Objective" (above), the Board of Directors, along with the dozen or so farmers that were involved during the planning stages, placed heavy emphasis on their desire for the market to encourage and stimulate public engagement with the production and consumption of local products.

By prioritizing community engagement and producer-consumer interaction, the AFM follows a model set by other farmers' markets around the country that strive to serve as "keystones" of social and economic activity (Gillespie et al 2007). While farmers' markets are just one of many methods for distributing locally-produced food, many feel that their open, public nature that directly links producers to consumers and to one another offers unique social benefits (Gillespie et al 2007; Lev et al 2007; Sommer et al 1981). Among these benefits are transparency and legibility in food production and purchase. While farmers are eager to have a market in which to sell their goods, customers are equally eager to learn farmers' names, talk to them about how they grow particular foods, and learn favorite methods for preparing them. The market scene—customers milling around with baskets brimming with fresh vegetables, while sipping hot coffee and chatting with an overall-clad farmer; a local chef conducting a cooking demonstration using produce obtained at the

market; children dancing happily to live bluegrass music while their parents catch up with friends; people shaking hands and introducing themselves to one another—is almost unbelievably prosaic, and is exactly what market organizers, farmers, craftspeople and customers envisioned in the months (and years) leading up to opening day.

### *Athens Locally Grown*

Athens Locally Grown (ALG) is a creative new approach to local food distribution that has served as a model for other communities throughout the United States (Locally Grown). ALG began in 2001 as an online initiative to connect local food producers to restaurant owners. The founders of ALG quickly realized that wholesale distribution could not afford farmers the payment they deserved, so they shifted their customer base to local individuals and families. Currently, ALG’s roughly sixty producers sell local produce, meat, dairy, baked goods, value-added food items, and handmade crafts to over 1200 members (individuals and families) in the Athens area. ALG’s manager and creator designed a web-based market model that is simple and transferable; consequently, the Locally Grown Market model has now spread to over seventy communities nationwide (Locally Grown).

The model for ALG is innovative and efficient; ALG’s founder, Eric Wagoner, describes the web-based grower cooperative as an “example of technology making things easier for both the farmer and the customer” (Locally Grown). In this model, growers are able to post their expected availability of particular products each week, and customers have two days to log on to the ALG website and place their order from a list of available products. One day each week, customers pick up their pre-ordered items at the old State Farmers’ Market building, assisted by Wagoner and his staff of volunteers.

With a diverse array of growers and crafters offering a variety of products, customers are able to access a wide range of seasonal, local, and non-certified organic foods and handmade crafts. The model also serves farmers by providing easy access to a loyal customer base and enabling them to “harvest to order” so they won’t have to take unsold food home.

### *CSA: Community Supported Agriculture*

There are currently three Community Supported Agriculture farms that operate within 5 miles of Athens. While each has a slightly different structure and distinct opportunities and expectations for members, they all follow the basic CSA model in which “members” invest in the farm, either by contributing a lump sum at the beginning of the season or installments throughout the growing season. This contribution (which varies, but generally averages around \$35 per share per week) reflects production costs of the particular farm—including salaries, investments for seeds and tools, machinery maintenance, land payments, et cetera. Receiving payment at the beginning of the season, when farmers tend to make most of their big purchases, enables farmers greater security than they might find selling through other, more traditional, markets. In exchange for their investment, members receive a share of the farm’s output throughout the season—generally a weekly box filled to the brim with freshly harvested vegetables, fruits, herbs, cut flowers, and, in some cases, an increasingly diverse array of foodstuffs that may include baked goods, jams, meat, eggs and other products.

When the CSA concept arrived in the United States in the 1980s, it maintained the original Japanese emphasis of displaying “the farmer’s face on the vegetables” by encouraging meaningful connection between producers and consumers (Getz 1991). A major component of this “connection” was involving members in all aspects of running the farm,

including organizational and operational tasks and financial management. Since the first CSAs emerged in New England in the 1980s, CSA has taken on new and varied forms throughout the country, although one important similarity, as Ostrom (2007) notes, is that today's CSA farms "are primarily started, administered, and sustained by the farmers," rather than the members (106). This has important implications for the success of CSA farms, which employ a variety of tactics for increasing member commitment and investment. Ostrom points to three generalized management strategies that tended to lead to greater member retention and economic viability in the CSA farms she studied in the U.S. Midwest. The first she calls the "classical approach" because it most closely approximates the original design of CSA as envisioned and realized in Japan. Farms that follow this strategy have explicit expectations that members will be engaged, to varying degrees, in all activities and management of the farm. The second common approach is the "nonprofit," which Ostrom describes as an "innovative variant of the first" where a farm may form a board of directors and take on a particular mission (such as education or feeding the hungry) (2007:115). Finally, the "entrepreneurial" approach is business-oriented and farmer-directed and may feature technological efficiencies or hired labor. These three distinct approaches provide a useful framework for understanding the differences amongst the three CSA farms in Athens, Georgia, which will be presented in Chapter 5.

#### *Other local food distribution methods*

In addition to the three markets described above, many farmers also elect to sell their produce, meat, milk, or eggs to local restaurants or grocery stores. Since most of these businesses are accustomed to buying wholesale from large distributors, there is as yet no

highly efficient or profitable method for small-scale growers to seek out these markets. As will be described in the results section, a few farms do have special relationships with local businesses or institutions and are thus able to regularly sell directly to those partners. Many growers seek out restaurants for selling surplus, and restaurant owners and chefs often develop strong relationships with farmers who they are then willing and eager to support.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND ANALYSIS**

In order to learn about how Athens-area small-scale farmers marketed and sold their products, I relied on both formal and informal ethnographic data collection between August 2007 and March 2009. While this thesis draws explicitly from a series of semi-structured interviews (approved by The International Review Board's Office of Human Subjects) conducted during February and March of 2009, my work with local food initiatives and on local farms during the previous year and a half informed both the structure of the project and my familiarity with the research participants and their work. The methods presented in this chapter were used to research the social and economic profiles of a group of local small-scale food producers.

### **Sampling techniques: Purposive and Snowball Sampling**

Research participants were recruited and selected in a multi-phase process involving network research followed by purposive and snowball sampling. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, entails the deliberate choice of an informant based on particular qualities or knowledge the informant possesses (Tongco 2007). Purposive sampling was useful in this research, because it ensured that a diversity of farming and marketing structures were represented in the research. Snowball sampling, in which a few "key players" are identified and asked to recommend other potential informants, was a useful complement and antecedent to the purposive sampling (Bernard 2006).



To identify key players that would “get the snowball rolling,” I sent an email to the manager of the Athens Locally Grown (ALG) network of growers, informing him of the research and requesting permission to contact growers within that network (which spans a geographic radius of approximately 100 miles, with Athens at the center). Since ALG is a web-based farmers’ market, growers are encouraged to post information about their operation to the “Our Growers” section of the website, and often include email addresses and phone numbers where they may be contacted. Emails were sent to all growers within the network who had posted contact information on the ALG website, and also to three additional growers (Full Moon Farm, Woodland Gardens, the UGA Horticulture Farm), outside the ALG network but prominent within the network of local growers. I also chose to interview PLACE’s executive director to learn about the history of local food initiatives in Athens (Figure 4-1).

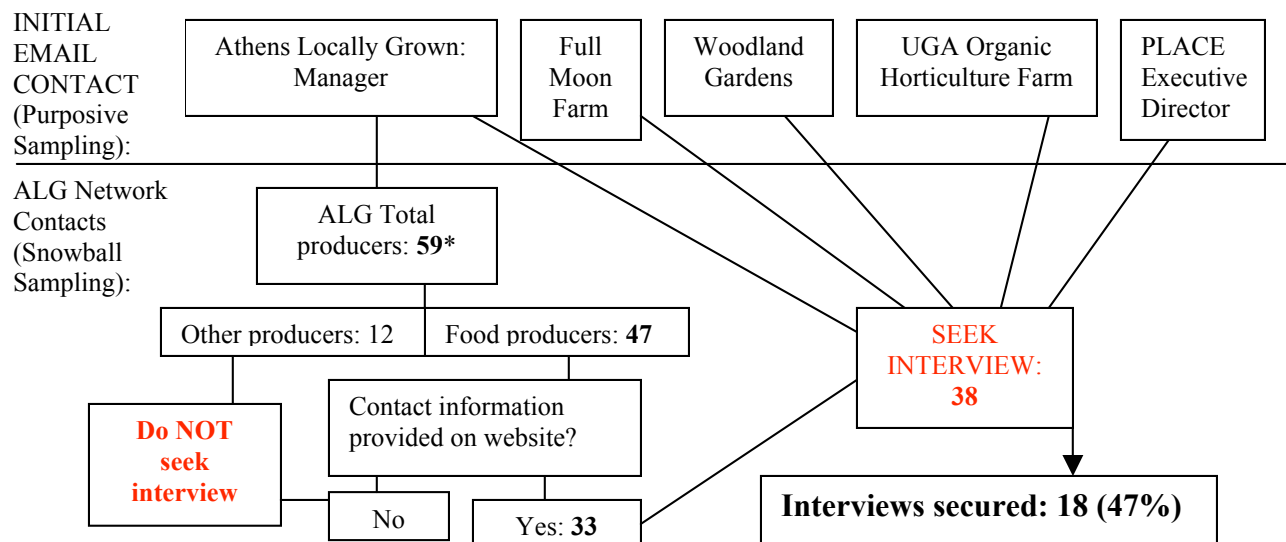


Figure 4-1: Sampling method

The 33 ALG food producers with available contact information, three additional growers, PLACE's executive director, and ALG's manager constituted an initial sample size (N) of 38. From that group, interviews were secured with 16 growers that represented a range of farm size, product, and market structure. Within the group of 16, there were a few "key players" that were identified by early informants. Scheduling the interviews so that key informants, such as the manager of the ALG market and the President of the Board of Directors for the AFM (both growers themselves), were early informants, provided an opportunity for them to suggest others in the network who were important—either because they had been farming in Athens for a long time, or because they represent an approach and perspective that are distinctive and/or demonstrative of a particular value, philosophy, or priority.

### **Research Methods: Observation and Semi-Structured Interview**

Research for this project consisted of a combination of observation and semi-structured interviews, conducted on farms and at the Athens Locally Grown (ALG) pick-up site. In this research, observation included weekly visits to ALG and trips to a number of area farms. These research techniques forced me to consider the curious role of the researcher engaged in a study of neighbors and friends. There is a delicate difficulty to this sort of research, as I recognize a tendency to want to report only the positive and celebratory aspects of a community that I have been intrigued enough to investigate. I hope that by acknowledging that tendency early on, I have been able to responsibly correct for it by consciously analyzing the data in as objective and straightforward a manner as is possible.

In February and March of 2009, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 growers who had responded to email inquiries (Figure 4-1). I divided interviews into four sections that covered (1) personal history with farming, (2) market demand and market selection, (3) social capital amongst farmers, and (4) general economic considerations (Appendix A). Farmers participating in a CSA were asked a supplemental grouping of questions regarding their CSA operation (Appendix B). All informants were sent a series of sample questions (via email) a few days before the interview (Appendix C). Sample questions were designed to give informants an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the scope and purpose of the research and, in some cases, to look up any information they might not have on hand during the interview. At the time of the interview, each interviewee read and signed consent forms that explained the nature and purpose of the study, the value of his or her participation, and allowed interviewees to elect that their name and information remain confidential.

All grower-interviews began with an opportunity for the farmer to speak freely about his or her experience of farming in/around Athens. This free form enabled me to glean from the start what issues were most important to the particular grower. I then adapted the order and wording of the questions to suit flow of the conversation. This method assured that I received the required information in a manner that felt natural and non-intrusive to the informant (Bernard 2006).

### **Prior relevant experience**

In addition to the methods described above, my prior and continued engagement with the local food community in Athens greatly informed the present research. Bernard (2006)

explains that participant observation allows researchers to “intellectualize what [they] already know” (140). During the summer of 2008, I served as a volunteer and working member at a local CSA farm—meaning that I earned a large share of produce each week in exchange for time spent harvesting, weeding, mulching, processing, and helping out with other farm chores. By viewing this experience through the lens of research, I was able to gain insights that might have been lost on me as a mere participant. This experience also provided me with an intimate appreciation for the discipline and commitment demanded of small-scale organic farmers. Each day at the farm, I witnessed creative and spontaneous problem-solving that resulted from respectful and open communication between the two full-time farmers that managed the two-acres under production. Oftentimes, during conversations about the relative merits of pole versus bush beans (the former require significant labor before planting but make harvesting much easier), or how to deal with a virulent case of powdery mildew attacking the squash plants, the farmers would mention what so-and-so farmer did in similar situations. The farmers with whom I worked were, at the time, participating in Georgia Organics’ Farmer “Mentor-Mentee” program, which linked them up with another grower in the area who could draw from several years experience farming in different environments and market situations to provide advice to newer growers. While the farmers I worked with often referred to their mentor’s suggestions, they also constantly referenced other farmers in their network—either for their ability to provide access to a certain tool or implement, or for their acquired knowledge of farming or marketing-related issues.

In addition to time spent working on that particular farm, I helped to organize volunteers during the opening months of the new Athens Farmers’ Market (AFM), from May through July of 2008. That weekly exposure to local growers and customers eager for their

produce enabled observation of the interaction amongst growers in a market setting. It also gave me the opportunity to meet and become friendly with a number of growers that I would later seek out for interviews for this research. Finally, participating in the ritual of the market each week allowed me to recognize the validity and energy supporting a burgeoning local foods movement in Athens. All of these observations and sensations served to inform and ground subsequent formal ethnographic research.

### **Data analysis**

Following Holloway and colleagues' (2007) consideration of "possible food economies," the research data will be analyzed according to a heuristic framework that emerged directly from the interviews themselves. The three market models that constitute the majority of Athens' local food network (AFM, ALG, and CSA) will be considered and compared within eight analytical "fields," adapted from Holloway and colleagues (2007). Table 4-1 provides descriptions of these fields.

The first analytical field, the "site of food production," considers where food is produced and accounts for the size and location of farms that operate within each model. The second, "food production methods," refers to the regulations and/or expectations that govern how food is grown, processed and distributed. Each market model has slightly different standards, and thus varying degrees of ease of entry. The third field examines the "supply chain" along which food passes to move from one arena (generally that of production) to other arenas (generally distribution, sale and consumption). Each market model employs different methods and utilizes different technologies or tactics for transferring food from producer to consumer. The fourth field, very much related to the third, examines those

particular “arenas of exchange” in which food, knowledge, currency, and other material and symbolic goods, change hands.

The fifth and sixth fields consider producers’ interactions with consumers and with other producers, respectively. These two fields may best demonstrate the degree to which each market model contributes to producers’ development and maintenance of social capital, although it is important that these fields are situated within the broader context generated by combining analysis from each of the other fields; social capital will be demonstrated to emerge as a proxy to other considerations enumerated in other analytical fields. For example, the seventh field, “motivation for participation,” highlights all the varied reasons that producers have for participating in one or another market model; the social capital demonstrated in fields five and six may prove an important motivator in this analytical field.

Table 4-1: Heuristic fields for analyzing food projects

| <i>Heuristic Analytical Fields</i>                 | <i>Description</i>   |
|--|--|
| 1. Site of food production                         | Encompasses the spatial scale and location of food production  |
| 2. Food production methods                         | Organic (certified or non-), Certified Naturally Grown; Choice of food production method indicates producer’s own priorities and producer’s assessment of consumer desires |
| 3. Supply chain                                    | How food moves from producer to consumer; may employ diverse technologies or methods   |
| 4. Arena of exchange                               | The spaces in which food is exchanged; encompasses both the physical site and what is actually exchanged   |
| 5. Producer-consumer interaction                   | Exposure of producers to their consumers and vice-versa; encompasses length of time, location and context of interaction   |
| 6. Producer-producer interaction                   | Exposure of producers to one another; encompasses social and business-related interaction, knowledge-sharing   |
| 7. Motivations for participation                   | Encompasses producers’ motivations for marketing and selling their product(s) through a particular market method   |
| 8. Constitution of individual and group identities | The ways in which the particular market model depends upon and recreates specific subject positions and identities for both producers and consumers                        |

SOURCE: Adapted from Holloway et al 2007 Possible food economies: A methodological framework for exploring food production-consumption relationships, Table 1, p.8.

Finally, the eighth analytical field examines how each market model relies upon previously existing personal and group identities, and how new identities emerge within and in response to the needs and structure of each model. This will consider, for example, the

degree to which a producer is required to wear several different “hats” to successfully market and sell his product, and the influence of those multiple roles upon producers’ relationships and sense of belonging within the particular market community.

Concurrent with general analysis of the three market models through the analytical fields presented above, the discussion will also focus specifically on the question of social capital within the three markets. This analysis will utilize the major themes from social capital theory to identify and describe the forms of social capital that are prevalent in this particular local food system generally, and in each of the market models specifically. These themes and possible manifestations of each are presented in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2: Sample manifestations of social capital within a local food network

| <i>Social Capital Theme</i>                   | <i>Manifestation</i>   |
|---|--|
| Notions of trust, goodwill, and solidarity    | High degree of communication and collaboration   |
| Public and/or private good                    | Expressed desire to improve the health and well-being of the greater community   |
| Easy flow of information, ideas, and goods    | Utilization of and reliance upon informal and formal information channels that connect growers to one another and to consumers |
| Strong community ties and strategic alliances | Relevant connections to local organizations and interest groups; high degree of civic engagement                               |
| Norms and effective sanctions                 | Specific expectations and obligations present some barriers to entry and enable a sense of membership                          |

While analyzing the interviews, I paid particular attention to these themes in order to determine the relevance of social capital to farmer decision-making and economic success. The content and results of that analysis are presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Although this project set out to measure social capital amongst farmers in a particular local food economy, it quickly became clear that farmers' social capital is deeply enmeshed in numerous other variables worthy of investigation. Among these factors are farmers' various community and personal roles, their economic security, their farm size and structure, and their personal politics and ideologies. Each of the market models investigated in this research proved to serve diverse and distinct purposes depending on particular farmers' needs and priorities.

This chapter is divided into three major sections. The first provides a brief presentation of the farms participating in this study, including their location, size, market portfolio and other characteristics. The second section examines in greater detail the three market models (Athens Farmers Market, Athens Locally Grown, and CSA) introduced in Chapter 3. Finally, the third section addresses the research questions presented in Chapter 1, and discusses how the research findings illuminated particular results.

### **Description of participating farms**

As Figures 5-1 and 5-2 show and Table 5-1 demonstrates in greater detail, the farmers I interviewed represented a diverse range of market portfolios, product diversification, farm size, and experience farming.



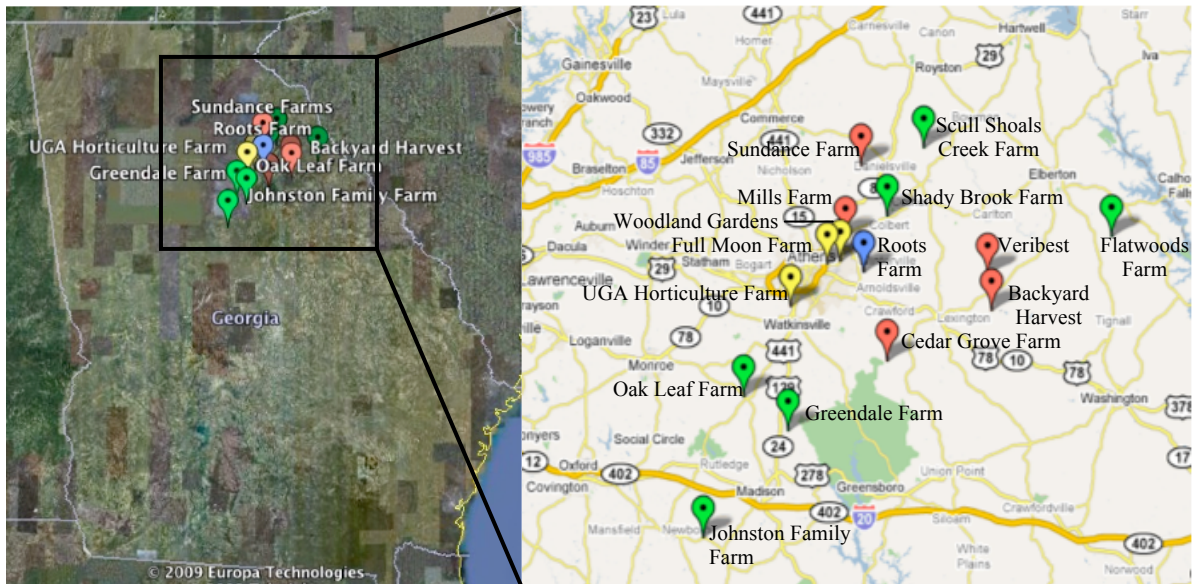


Figure 5-1: Locations of participating farms

Blue pin: Sells through AFM, ALG, and CSA  
Red pin: Sells through AFM and ALG

Green pin: Sells through ALG  
Yellow pin: Sells through alternate markets (but not ALG)

As the maps (Figure 5-1) indicate, growers selling through Athens Locally Grown (but not the Athens Farmers' Market) tend to come from further away and to occupy larger acreage. While there are one or two meat producers that sell through AFM, I was only able to interview vegetable growers, which partially accounts for the smaller average acreage of AFM producers (Table 5-1).

Table 5-1: Characteristics of participating farms according to market portfolio

|                           | Market Portfolio |                   |                     |                       |                       |                       |               | Average Overall/<br>Total          |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
|                           | ALG              | ALG<br>and<br>AFM | ALG,<br>AFM,<br>CSA | ALG,<br>AFM,<br>other | ALG,<br>some<br>other | CSA,<br>some<br>other | Some<br>other |                                    |
| Number                    | 2                | 3                 | 1                   | 3                     | 4                     | 2                     | 1             | <b>16 farms</b>                    |
| Product*                  | L/V              | V/V/V             | V                   | V/VE/VP               | D/ME/V/E              | V/V                   | V             | <b>V=64%;<br/>6%E,ME,L,D,VE,VP</b> |
| Age                       | 51.5             | 51.75             | 28                  | 43.8                  | 42.2                  | 33                    | 35            | <b>40.75 years</b>                 |
| Acreage                   | 20               | 1.7               | 2                   | 2.4                   | 192.25                | 5                     | 2             | <b>32.2 acres</b>                  |
| Years Farming             | 4                | 6.3               | 3                   | 16                    | 6.75                  | 5.5                   | 2             | <b>6.2 years</b>                   |
| Percent farm<br>full-time | 50%              | 67%               | 100%                | 100%                  | 25%                   | 100%                  | 100%          | <b>56%</b>                         |

\*ALG=Athens Locally Grown; AFM=Athens Farmers' Market; CSA=Community Supported Agriculture

\*L=lamb; V=vegetables; E=eggs; M=Meat; P=milled products; D=Dairy

There was also tremendous diversity in the experience levels of farmers I interviewed. Just one of the 16 growers farmed on the same land where his parents (and grandparents, in this case) grazed cattle. Some of the farmers had grown up around plants or with kitchen gardens; others had never grown or raised anything until a few years ago. Most growers have been farming seriously for less than ten years, although everyone I interviewed anticipates farming well into the future.

Most (64%) of the growers I interviewed specialized in vegetable production, although some diversified their production by adding eggs or grain products (Figure 5-2). It should of course be noted that “vegetable production” on the farms I visited constituted immense diversity; all of these farms produced dozens of varieties of greens, onions, squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, herbs, eggplants, okra, corn, garlic, and blueberries, just to name a few.

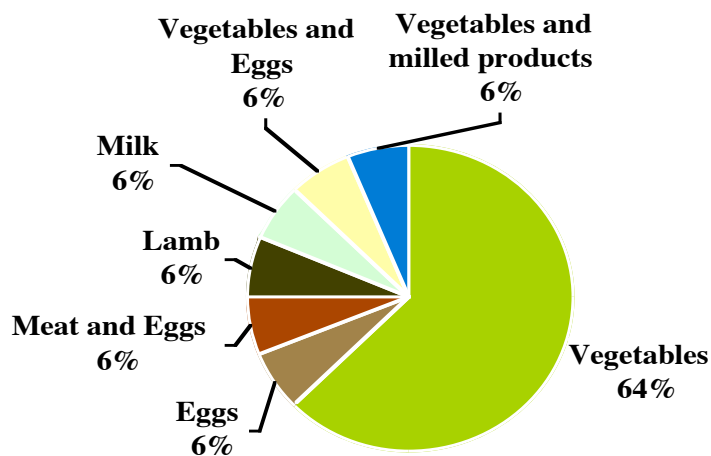


Figure 5-2: Production of participating farms

### **Description of market models**

The three market models introduced in Chapter 3 afford different opportunities and demand different levels of commitment from area farmers. Many farmers choose to diversify their market portfolios by distributing through some combination of markets. This section describes the three market models according to the heuristic framework presented in Chapter 4, and highlights advantages and disadvantages of each market, as gleaned through grower-interviews (Table 5-2). These descriptions contribute to the discussion of research questions that follows.

#### *Athens Farmers' Market*

Todd and his wife, Dale, run Veribest Farm, located about 30 miles east of Athens. Both Todd and Dale work full-time off-farm, but Todd considers growing “real, clean food” for people to be a higher calling than his day job as a carpenter and woodworker. During the 2008 market season, which spanned 27 weeks from May through November, both Todd and Dale would arrive home early from work (around 5p.m) on Friday afternoons to begin harvesting for the Saturday market. Dale cut fresh flowers and prepared bouquets while Todd harvested, washed, and bagged all the produce—tasks that typically kept them busy until about 1a.m. The couple would then sleep for a few hours and wake at 4:30 am to load the truck and be at the market by 7am.

Table 5-2: Analytical fields for comparing market models

| Heuristic<br>'analytical field'                        | Market Model   |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
|  | <i>AFM</i>   | <i>ALG</i>  | <i>CSA/Subscription Box Program</i>  |
| <b>Site of food production</b>                         | 10-15 Farms, mostly within 40 miles of Athens  | 59 farms within 100 miles of Athens   | 3 farms within five miles of Athens  |
| <b>Food production methods</b>                         | Certified Naturally Grown/ (non)-certified organic   | No synthetic fertilizers or pesticides  | Non-certified organic<br>Biodynamic<br>Certified organic   |
| <b>Supply chain</b>                                    | Direct sale  | Internet marketing  | Pre-pay direct sale to members<br>45 shares, summer<br>60 shares, summer; 30 shares, spring<br>44 shares, summer; 22 year-round                                  |
| <b>Arena of exchange</b>                               | Outdoor weekly market  | Central distribution site; producers drop-off and consumers pick-up   | On-farm pick-up; in some cases, shares of food may be exchanged for work on the farm   |
| <b>Producer-consumer interaction</b>                   | --Substantial, face-to-face<br>--Educate consumers about farming practices, recipes, etc   | --Website descriptions may include photos and details of production for particular farms<br>--Farm tours<br>--Little to no face-to-face interaction at pick-up site | Varies, mostly depends on member desires<br>Encourage members to work at least 1x/mo.<br>Members may elect to work on farm<br>Members do not work on farm        |
| <b>Producer-producer interaction</b>                   | --Substantial, particularly with farmers occupying adjacent booths<br>--Cooperative spirit<br>--Good place to share insights and socialize   | --Opportunities for growers to communicate on website<br>--Face-to-face interaction varies but can be substantial   | --Cooperative spirit<br>--Mentor-mentee relationship between two CSA growers   |
| <b>Motivations for participation</b>                   | --Interaction with consumers and other producers<br>--Good visibility (1,000-2,000 customers/week)<br>--Can bring whatever is ready to be harvested  | --Convenient, time-efficient, well organized<br>--Very good visibility (over 1200 members)<br>--Harvest-to-order prevents waste and ensures freshness               | --Up-front payment from members assures financial security<br>--Resource-efficient<br>--members directly linked to the farm and farmers                          |
| <b>Constitution of individual and group identities</b> | --Farmer (the "face on the food")<br>--Marketer and Educator (explaining why locally grown costs more than the supermarket)<br>--Part of cohesive network of producers and market regulars (community) | --Producer<br>--Web-marketer (encourages photos and rich description of production practices/products)  | --Farmers and members may develop a "team spirit"<br>--Educators (managing volunteer members)<br>--Farmers and farm constitute a site for meaningful interaction |
| 1 Roots Farm; 2 Full Moon Farm; 3 Woodland Gardens     |  |   |  |

Todd described the Saturday market as an enormously gratifying—and equally exhausting—weekly endeavor. The exhaustion demands no further explanation. For Todd, gratification came in providing a clean and healthy alternative to what he considered to be a corporately corrupted food supply. As a new farmer, Todd felt exhilarated by the energy of the market, and appreciated its success as encouraging evidence that there is a future for him and his fellow growers in the area.

By the end of its first season, the AFM consisted of about twenty membership-holding vendors, including vegetable farmers, meat producers, bakers, two vendors selling prepared ethnic food, a vendor offering fresh juices, a coffee roaster, and several artisans and craftspeople. In addition to vendors, the market reserved tents for a chef demonstration, live music, market information, County Extension, and PLACE, the local non-profit that helped to establish the market. The approximately twenty-five tents that occupy the basketball courts at Bishop Park are sponsored by local businesses, whose names are proudly displayed on banners that adorn each tent. The AFM thus served to promote meaningful interaction and partnerships among farmers, community organizations, and local businesses.

Compared to the other market models considered in this study, the AFM has higher barriers to entry; while food producers are not required to certify their operations as organic, the board does encourage growers to commit to the standards of Certified Naturally Grown, a nationally recognized and endorsed, farmer-driven response to the stringent certification standards required for USDA Organic certification.<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, only four of the

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<sup>1</sup> Although CNG's "certification standards" are derived from the USDA's Organic Standards, Certified Naturally Grown is an independent program, not affiliated with the USDA. Unlike the USDA Organic Certification, which requires inspections and infrastructure that may be prohibitively expensive for small-scale farmers (such as the majority of those I interviewed), CNG relies on simple and recognizable standards, pay-as-you're-able donations, and negligible amounts of paperwork. Additionally, inspections are done by other CNG farmers to encourage sharing and advice-giving among certified farmers.

fifteen food producers from the 2008 market season were certified according to Naturally Grown standards, although all eight with whom I spoke adhered to CNG guidelines, and were considering or working towards becoming certified. (See Appendix D: Athens Farmers' Market 2009 Vendor Application for Growers).

Some meat producers, in particular, feel that the CNG expectation is particularly limiting for them, since providing CNG feed to animals may be prohibitively expensive or locally inaccessible. Because the AFM requires vendors of meat and other animal products (such as eggs, milk, cheese, and honey) to “abide by all applicable federal, state and local regulations and inspections regimes” (Athens Farmers Market); and because animal processing facilities for small-scale producers are often hard to come by, meat producers are, arguably, at somewhat of a disadvantage. During the 2008 AFM season, there was just one animal-product vendor that sold regularly at the market. That farm, Nature's Harmony, produces grass-fed beef, pastured heritage (or traditional breeds with special genetic characteristics) of poultry and eggs, heritage and free-foraging pork, heritage turkey, and pastured lamb; to sell at the AFM, Nature's Harmony is required to sell from their refrigerated truck, and thus must set up outside the fence that contains other producers. Farmer Melissa, from Oak Leaf Farm, hopes to sell her free-range eggs at the AFM this year, but must first obtain certification from the Georgia Department of Agriculture to verify that her farm is a licensed facility. (See Appendix F: Basic Regulatory Requirements for Licensing a Small Egg Producer).

For vegetable producers, perhaps a greater barrier to entry than the standards set forth by the market's board of directors is the enormous amount of time vendors must invest in the market each week. Farmer Todd's story, presented above, is not unique; most of the vendors

I interviewed were enthusiastic about participating in the market, but conceded that—for purely economic reasons—the market was not always worth the trouble. Although the market was over by noon each week, most farmers report being so exhausted by the end of the market that they had a difficult time getting much done by the time they packed up and made it back home. Ironically, for growers who work full-time off farm, committing every Saturday to selling at the market often directly conflicts with their desire to farm; Saturday is one of the few times they can devote to the weeds and harvesting that may have been neglected during the week.

One of the farmers I interviewed works full time as professor at the University of Georgia. After nearly 30 years of teaching, Tim looks forward to “moving on to a better occupation” in farming when he retires from teaching. While he acknowledged that the Athens Farmers’ Market would be a good opportunity to get to know other local growers, he explained that the cost of driving to Athens and back from his farm (about fifty miles each way) didn’t justify becoming a member of the market.

For most of the growers who sold through both AFM and ALG in 2008, the two markets yielded roughly equivalent portions of net income; however, some growers preferentially focused on one market over the other. Take Farmer Jay, who is the president of the Athens Farmers’ Market Board of Directors and who runs Cedar Grove Farm with his son Dylan and wife Marlene. In 2008, the family brought in nearly twice the amount in sales from AFM as compared to ALG, because they directed nearly all of their summertime produce to AFM; for relatively new growers who are working on increasing their production, the desire for a bountiful and enticing market stall may naturally lure growers to focus their attention on an outdoor market during the height of the growing season.

Other growers cited the social nature of the AFM as a reason for preferring it, despite the added labor, time, and opportunity costs it required. Farmer Todd noted that, although his year-round sales at ALG beat out his summer-season sales at AFM, he liked selling at the Saturday market “way, way better” for one simple reason: “I like people,” he said.

Whether or not they sell through the AFM, all of the growers I spoke with commented on the social networking that the Saturday market facilitates, both among growers and between growers and their customers. Farmer Jim, who runs Jim’s Farm in Winterville, joked about farmers coming together at the Saturday market to “commiserate, cry on each others’ shoulders, talk about the latest hassle with weeds and bugs...” Farmer Sara, one of two full-time farmers that operate Roots Farm, right next door to Jim’s Farm, agreed; she enjoys coming to the market even if she’s not working the Roots Farm booth, just to talk with other farmers, see what they’re growing, and share ideas and questions with them. Sara, like other area farmers, is especially grateful for a strong network of growers when it comes to addressing problems that inevitably arise in the world of farming. Because “there are just so many ways to do what we’re doing out here,” Sara knows that ultimately, she must make decisions that are most sensible for her particular situation; still, she said, “That’s one great thing about having a farming community: someone’s bound to have had a problem that you’ve not yet encountered or that you’re encountering for the first time.” It’s helpful, in other words, to have access to a store of knowledge and experience both for responding to problems and preventing them where possible.

In addition to the opportunity to connect with other growers, the AFM enabled food producers to meet and interact with others in the local community. Many customers who frequented the AFM during its first season were eager to support what they perceived to be



the values behind local food and farming, and many were excited to share their enthusiasm with the farmers themselves. For many growers, it was precisely this support that encouraged them to come to the market each week, rather than selling through less direct means. While many consumers came to the market already relatively familiar with concepts such as “the true cost of food” and the many arguments for eating locally-produced food (and thereby supporting the people who produce it), several growers spoke about the need to educate consumers about these issues, and argued that the AFM is a natural and easy place to do that. Farmer Ed of Sundance Farm in Danielsville, who came to farming primarily out of concern for his family’s nutritional well-being, emphasized the importance of growing new and different varieties to sell at the AFM. He has found that market-goers enjoy seeing produce they cannot easily find in grocery stores, and he and his wife enjoy experimenting with new varieties; Asian cucumbers and eggplants, and a dizzying selection of greens and garlies are some of their favorite successes. Because Ed or his wife Kim can describe the vegetables to their customers, provide samples for them to taste, and offer recipe suggestions, they feel that the AFM empowers them to grow a diverse array of vegetables in varying quantities.

Interacting with customers also provides the farmer with an opportunity to educate customers about “the true cost of food”—that is, the hidden costs associated with large-scale industrial agriculture, such as transportation, cheap labor, pollution and loss of nutrition and taste quality. Farmers reported that customer complaints about the higher relative cost of locally and organically grown food are increasingly scarce; however, Farmers Boo and Becky of Backyard Harvest Farm have encouraged skeptical customers to visit their farm to better understand the effort required to cultivate, harvest, and process the high-quality vegetables that they bring to the market each week. On the issue of educating the consumer,

Dylan from Cedar Grove Farm added “some people don’t understand what ‘sustainable’ or ‘organic’ mean; people don’t even realize what they are—or are not—buying.” While it can be a challenge to convince a skeptic to pay \$4 a pound for carrots, it becomes easier in a market setting such as the AFM, where the grower becomes “the face of the food” and the sight and taste of fresh carrots speak for themselves.

In sum, the growers who chose to sell at the AFM do so because they value the opportunity to have meaningful interaction with community members and other farmers. While AFM vendors typically also sell through other markets, such as ALG, they tend to preferentially direct more sales to AFM during the summer growing season, for two primary reasons. First, vendors desire a bountiful and attractive display to attract customers. Second, while AFM requires a weekly commitment, other markets accept inconsistent amounts of surplus produce, thus encouraging growers to focus the bulk of their energies on the AFM. Most importantly, growers who choose to go to the trouble of selling through the weekly outdoor market do so because they value the social atmosphere that both facilitates meaningful engagement with other community members, and benefits their future business by “branding” their products with their names, faces, and stories.

### *Athens Locally Grown*

Athens Locally Grown’s (ALG) vendors occupy similar sites of food production as AFM vendors (typically small, diversified farms), although the flexible structure of the market enables more producers to participate (Table 5-2). All of the AFM vendors I spoke with also sell through ALG, but a number of ALG producers sell through no other market. At the time of writing, ALG consisted of 59 producers, 47 of which were food producers.

ALG's most notable aspects are the high levels of organization and efficiency afforded by the sophisticated Locally Grown software. Producers who sell through ALG lauded the convenience and security of the system, which enables them to harvest to order, thus preventing wasteful over-harvesting or frustrating under-harvesting, foibles often associated with a traditional farmers' market such as the AFM. Additionally, growers save time in this model, because they don't need to "sit" with their produce; they simply drop off what they have harvested (or collected, processed, or produced) and return home with a check.

Growers also appreciated ALG's flexible structure, which enables a diverse range of farmers to sell through a single market. Some vendors are backyard gardeners who are happy to have a profitable outlet for their surplus summer tomatoes or cuttings from a prolific rosemary bush. Others are full-time farmers who utilize ALG as a synergistic complement to other markets. Producers wishing to sell through the market begin by submitting an electronic information form through the ALG website (Appendix E). Most of the time, prospective growers are already familiar with the market and with its manager, Eric Wagoner, who is responsible for approving new growers to enter the market. Generally, if Eric already knows a prospective grower, and is familiar with their operation, he will approve them right away; otherwise, he may need to visit prospective farms to make sure they meet the standards of the market (i.e., no synthetic or chemical pesticides or fertilizers).

While most growers agree that ALG's low barriers to entry are a boon to the local food movement in general, because they encourage more producers to enter the market and expand its influence, some argue that standards for quality could be higher. Farmer Boo has been growing and selling food in Athens for twenty years and is generally recognized within the grower network as someone with extensive stores of valuable and hard-earned

knowledge, as well as a strong work ethic and a high expectation for quality in his produce. The vegetables that he and his wife, Becky, cultivate at their farm, Backyard Harvest, are highly valued by local chefs and devoted customers. Because of the commitment Boo and Becky have made to selling only high-quality produce, they expressed some frustration that ALG does not have higher standards. And since the market is web-based, it may be difficult for consumers to distinguish higher-quality products from lesser-quality ones. This bestows responsibility on both the producer and the consumer; producers may need to differentiate their products by posting information and photographs, while consumers may benefit by contacting growers and educating themselves about what is grown and according to what methods.

The problem, of course, with these expectations, is that farmers may not have the time or technological savvy to promote themselves and their product through lavish description and tempting photographs (although the ALG manager claims to have made the process extremely simple), and it may still be difficult for consumers to gauge the quality of different producer's goods. As Boo pointed out, the problem may be compounded with new producers and new consumers constantly entering the ALG market, because there is a learning curve for both groups; it takes time for producers (many of whom are first-time growers) to work out the kinks in their operation (which includes growing, but also harvesting, cleaning/processing, packaging, and marketing), and for consumers to learn who produces, in their opinion, the best carrots, lettuce, milk, eggs, etc.

Although they appreciate ALG for its efficiency and convenience, many producers lament the lack of interaction between them and their customers. Farmers Russ and Christel run Greendale Farm, a diversified grassfed-and-finished meat operation nestled amongst a

sea of industrial-scale broiler houses in Morgan County, Georgia. Russ and Christel grew up in Zimbabwe and South Africa, respectively, and the couple had done some farming in South Africa before coming to the United States. A few years ago, Russ's software company transferred him to the U.S—first to Florida and then to Georgia, which seemed an ideal setting to pursue their vision of farming as “holons”; growers who diversify their operation as much as possible to offer a variety of products to a devoted customer base have adopted the term *holon*, which Hungarian author Arthur Koestler introduced in 1967 to describe “self-regulating open systems which display both the autonomous properties of wholes and the dependent properties of parts” (Koestler 1969:1). In agriculture, the concept translates to whole-systems production and distribution, where all elements on a farm are considered for their use and their market value. A farmer raising cows, for example, should endeavor to market not just the meat, but also milk and cheese. This structure, of course, depends on their ability to establish and maintain strong relationships with their customers, which has been difficult to do through the ALG network; Christel typically makes the weekly delivery of pre-ordered eggs and broilers to the Old Farmers' Market building on E. Broad Street on Thursdays. With any number of her four children in tow, she usually is not able to stick around for several hours to match the names on her egg-orders to the faces that come to pick them up.

Eric, who manages the ALG network and website, acknowledged that the social element may be lacking from ALG, although not entirely. The pick-up site is increasingly a place where customers mill around and talk with one another while they wait for ALG volunteers to assemble their purchases. During the 3:30-4:30 p.m producer drop-off hour, many growers mingle, some even discussing plans for collaboration. Farmer Jennif, for

example, who operates a small sheep farm, has been constrained by the high costs of transporting her sheep to a processing facility 70 miles away. She has talked with other meat producers (like Farmer Christel, among others) about helping to get them started with sheep so they can share the costs of processing—both these relationships and the potential collaboration that develops from them are a direct result of participation in ALG.

ALG manager Eric mentioned more explicit efforts to connect producers and members of ALG. One popular initiative has been the “Farmer for a Day” program, which brings 25 to 30 ALG members out to an ALG farm to spend a few hours working, followed by a farm-fresh lunch. As Eric pointed out, this event, which happens one Saturday per month during the warmer half of the year, goes beyond “putting a face” on the food that customers purchase through ALG; it connects consumers to the physical place in which their food is produced, and engages them—even if to a small degree—in the process of production.

Finally, while the depth of interaction may be somewhat lacking in the ALG model, the market’s reach is extensive and growing. At the time of writing, ALG had approximately 1200 customers, up from the 20-or-so early local-food converts that joined the ALG network when it first began in 2001. During the “off-season” (roughly, late Fall to early Spring), ALG processes about 200 orders per week; that number jumps to between 300 and 400 orders during the height of the summer season. Regardless of the time of year, orders average around \$30, although some customers regularly spend \$100 or more, and others order only occasionally or in very small amounts. Customer-members pay \$25 per family per year, a fee which supports the operation of the website and organization of the market, farm tours and educational programs. Producer-members contribute a \$40 one-time fee when they join the

market, and 10% of total sales go to the market to cover its ongoing expenses. While growers acknowledge that 1700 people is still a small percentage of the Athens community (only about 1.5% of Athens' 114,063 residents and university students), most are encouraged by the growing popularity and awareness of ALG and many claim that they could not viably farm if not for ALG. At the very least, producers with diversified market structures consider ALG a valuable complement to other markets; for new or very small-scale producers, it is the easiest way for new growers to begin marketing and selling their product.

### *Community Supported Agriculture*

At the time of writing, there were three Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations serving the Athens community, and each operated in a slightly different way. Producers operating a CSA organize and manage their farms differently than those who sell through traditional markets. As one grower explained, the CSA model allows growers flexibility to plant with the seasons, rather than trying to be the first farmer at the market to show up with tomatoes. Because their sales are assured for the length of the season, the CSA model also helps to take some of the insecurity and anxiety out of farming; if a late frost or severe drought leads to crop loss or failure, that burden is shared by all members of the CSA, not just the farmers. Additionally, since community members invest in the farm's seasonal output, they are often engaged with farm processes throughout the season and are likely to become long-term supporters of both the particular farm and of local agriculture generally.

As the following sections will show, CSAs take many different forms, and the three in Athens demonstrate a small portion of the diversity that is common among CSA

operations. Here, each will be presented in terms of their goals, structures, and relationships with their shareholding members.

### ***Roots Farm***

Roots Farm's explicit emphases on connection, fellowship, environmental sustainability, and education characterize it as taking a "classical" approach to CSA (See Ostrom's descriptions of CSA in Chapter 3). The farm started its CSA program in 2007, making it the youngest CSA in the Athens area. Roots' 2009 CSA membership includes 45 individuals and families who come out to the farm one day each week (either Tuesday or Friday) to pick up their share of produce, the size and content of which vary throughout the season. In addition to the CSA, Roots sells produce at the AFM and ALG, and occasionally sells surplus basil or other produce to a local natural foods co-op. Despite these diversified distribution channels, Roots focuses primarily on its CSA as its most reliable and substantial source of income.

The farm is owned by two young men who both work full-time off-farm, but who purchased the 13-acre property (with 2 acres already in organic food production) in 1995 as a business investment. Two full-time, salaried women manage the farm and handle most of the planning and labor, although the owners are involved with financial management, long-term planning, and substantial or costly decisions.

On its website, Roots provides a description of the benefits and responsibilities that accompany membership in their CSA. The benefits listed are intended to appeal to a customer base that is interested in obtaining more than just a weekly box of vegetables; Roots emphasizes that membership enables shareholders to "harmonize with the flow of seasonal cycles," "reduce greenhouse emissions," and support local farmers by directly



participating in farm work (“at least once a month”) (Roots Farm). Interestingly, Roots frames members’ work on the farm as “an opportunity,” rather than an obligation, suggesting that many members join precisely because they are interested in working and learning on the farm. In fact, many members do become committed workers on the farm; some come out as often as once a week to help with harvest or other farm chores. Others take advantage of farm “work parties” that focus on accomplishing a particular task, such as planting a few rows of lettuce, staking and suckering tomatoes, mulching a section of the farm, or harvesting figs for the annual “figstival.”

Perhaps more so than other area farms, Roots places a strong emphasis on nurturing relationships by encouraging members and friends to spend time on the farm; whether working in the fields, canning surplus vegetables in the kitchen, or sharing a vegetarian potluck supper, friends and CSA members consider Roots an important part of their social and, in many cases, spiritual worlds. At Roots, friends come together to celebrate the season’s bounty and to appreciate the hard work and good fortune that enable it.

### ***Full Moon Farm***

Many elements of Full Moon Farm’s philosophy and operation make it quite similar to Roots Farm, although its business partnerships and educational components reveal Full Moon to be a hybrid of Ostrom’s three successful CSA prototypes (see Chapter 3). Full Moon Farm describes itself as a cooperative whose mission is “to offer innovative and community-based solutions to the most critical environmental, economic and social challenges of our time” (Full Moon Cooperative). By partnering with professors and students from the University of Georgia’s Odum School of Ecology, Full Moon strives to combine research and education with civic engagement and public outreach. The farm and cooperative

utilize relationships with agroecology researchers to engage “adaptive management,” which they describe as a philosophical approach to farming that is responsive to changing local environmental and ecological conditions.

In addition to its partnerships with the school of Ecology, Full Moon has a direct relationship with a local restaurant, Farm 255, which serves Full Moon produce and meat products and proudly pronounces its commitment to supporting and engaging with local agriculture. The farm sees the restaurant as a means of providing financial security, but more importantly as a convincing method for turning gastronomes and regular eaters on to the promise and flavor of “local, seasonal, and sustainable food” (Farm 255). This farm-restaurant partnership is unique in that the same group of owners manages and operates both enterprises, and most owners are engaged on the farm during the height of the summer season. This engagement fosters a sense of connectivity in the group running the enterprises, as well as their numerous customers at the restaurant and their CSA members.

Full Moon’s focus on education is evident in the detailed explanations of CSA and adaptive management found on their website; however, the farmers at Full Moon strongly encourage members and others interested in learning about sustainable farming to come out and explore and work on the farm. The emphases on experiential education, shared responsibility, and public outreach culminate in what the farm’s director describes as “an act of dissidence”—actively seeking an alternative to a dominant food production and distribution model that fails to provide “responsible and healthy nourishment for our body, spirit and culture” (Full Moon Cooperative).

### ***Woodland Gardens***

Woodland Gardens takes a very different approach from the educational and community-oriented foci of both Roots and Full Moon Farms. While Woodland Gardens does open itself up for educational tours, its emphasis is much more entrepreneurial. The farm does sell “box-subscriptions” each season, but does not consider itself a Community Supported Agriculture initiative in the traditional sense. Subscribers are neither expected nor encouraged to help out at the farm. In fact, the farmers at Woodland Gardens focus on efficiency, and pay a full-time staff of six farmers to handle all tasks on the farm. By planting extensively and using greenhouses and hoop-houses to extend their growing season, Woodland Gardens is able to maintain distribution to restaurants in Athens and Atlanta all year long. In addition to the subscription-box program and the restaurant partnerships, Woodland Gardens attends a weekly farmers’ market in Atlanta.

Where the other CSAs in this sample prioritize education and community engagement, Woodland Gardens puts the health and well-being of its farmers, the success of their business, and the quality of their product above all else. These priorities characterize Woodland Gardens as a farm that takes the “entrepreneurial approach” to CSA, while still working extremely hard to uphold the ideals of sustainability and viability that typically motivate alternative agricultural initiatives.

### ***Other local food distribution methods***

In addition to the three market models described above, some of the farmers I spoke with diversify their distribution by selling to local restaurants or other businesses. A local food co-op, called Daily Groceries Co-op, tries to buy from local growers as much as

possible; however, only two out of the 16 growers I interviewed makes regular deliveries to Daily Groceries. One of those producers, Russell, explained that demand for his hormone- and antibiotic-free cow's milk has substantially increased since he joined ALG in November of 2008. Johnston Family Farms is one of the only local operations offering milk, and its high demand suggests to Russell that people who are "at all interested in sustainability" are more eager to support a local product than an organic one "that was trucked in from Michigan."

Vegetable producers do not have a similar hold on the market but are still able to distribute to local businesses. A few area restaurants are eager to purchase local meat and produce—primarily for their superior taste—but only a few high-end restaurants in Athens can afford to pay slightly more than wholesale. As the manager of Athens Locally Grown observed as he struggled to connect farmers with restaurants, because Athens is a college town full of people accustomed to paying very little for their food, the town has established a restaurant culture where food is artificially cheap. Growers who do not have a well-established relationship with particular chefs or restaurant owners may have a hard time convincing them to pay the higher prices. However, growers who do have well-established relationships with particular chefs may call them up to see if they could use several pounds of tomatoes, basil, squash, or whatever else the grower may not be able to sell through AFM or ALG. Farmer Alice, who runs Mills Farm with her husband Tim, said that whenever she has a surplus of something, "I get on the phone, and start asking people, 'Do you want to buy some locally grown?' They usually do." Alice and Tim have diversified their vegetable operation by selling a variety of milled products—such as polenta, cornmeal, grits, and flour—that they produce on a mill powered by their mule, "Old Luke." The farm's Red Mule grits are a proud staple on a number of local restaurants' menus

One of the farmers I spoke with is working on selling his products further up the corporate ladder, getting his produce in a few high-end chain grocery stores such as Whole Foods and Earth Fare. Of the 16 growers I interviewed, this grower is the only one with serious aspirations of selling outside the local market. To sell to these chain grocers, he has gone through the organic certification process and is much more susceptible to quality control measures and strict oversight. Despite these setbacks, the grower feels that restricting distribution to the local market makes it “hard to make money, and easy to lose money” while intensive production for central distribution strikes him as a more lucrative option.

Another outlier model is the University of Georgia’s Organic Horticulture Farm. Although the Horticulture Farm operates outside the network of local growers, because it does not sell to any of the same markets as other growers in the study, it has an interesting institutional relationship that merits mention. Because the Horticulture Farm can rely heavily upon grants from the USDA and other funding agencies, it has the luxury of not having to prioritize financial considerations. Instead, the Horticulture Farm focuses on research and education. Students enrolled in the Horticulture Department’s “Organic Agriculture Certificate Program” are required to work on the farm, which has been run full-time by Robert Tate since 2007. During the 2008 growing season, Tate organized a CSA so that the farm could generate some of its own revenue; (he explained that at least one of the farm’s major grants is expected to run out by the end of 2009). Extra produce—not distributed through the CSA—was sold to the University’s Georgia Center for Continuing Education, which instituted a “Sustainable Fridays” lunch menu in its Savannah Room Restaurant that incorporated produce grown on the Horticulture Farm. The “Sustainable Fridays” initiative was well-publicized and hugely successful in its first year, encouraging university deans to

expand the program. In order to direct more food to the Georgia Center, Robert Tate cancelled the CSA for 2009 and now distributes all food grown on the farm directly to Chef Sam Lorensen at the Savannah Room Restaurant. Through its relationship with the University, the UGA Horticulture Farm is able to continue its primary purposes of research and education, while earning additional income. Surprisingly, there is very little interaction between Tate and other small-scale organic farmers in the area, who could surely benefit from the well-funded research being conducted at the Horticulture Farm. There is certainly an opportunity for future engagement of these similarly aspiring stakeholders.

### **Revisiting Research Questions**

*Research Question #1: Do farmers see their food production in something other than environmental and economic terms?*

The farmers I talked to presented a diverse number of reasons for choosing to farm. Of the 16 farmers I interviewed, none of them offered “making money” as their primary motivation for *beginning* to farm, although financial considerations became increasingly important, especially for growers attempting to farm full-time. Seven of the 16 growers I interviewed do NOT rely on their farm as their primary source of income, although at least three of those seven would prefer to farm full-time if it were financially feasible for them to do so.

During the interviews, *all* farmers voluntarily provided justifications for farming that were social in nature. These, of course, took different forms, and were emphasized to varying degrees. One farmer told me that he farmed because he wanted “to grow food for people, real food for people” so they wouldn’t have to eat food that had been genetically or chemically

altered or grown in an environmentally unsustainable way. Others spoke of the joy of feeling a part of some communal effort; One farmer commented “When I go to the Farmers’ Market at Bishop Park and people come up, and I meet all kinds of new people and we’re talking about the excitement of fresh food...there’s this cohesive attitude about ‘the environment is in trouble; our food is in trouble. Let’s all make this effort together.’”

It became clear that social concerns were not separate from environmental or economic ones. Many farmers spoke of the subsidies to large agribusinesses, and the economies of scale that make small-scale farming financially difficult (or almost impossible, in some cases). But, when consumers are educated about “the true cost of food”, the environmental effects of factory or industrial farming, or the degradation of rural livelihoods, they are more likely to demand the sorts of products that small-scale farmers have to offer. In this sense, social relationships are important not only for the social benefit they provide, but also because they can offer economic opportunity and long-term financial security.

Finally, as one farmer observed, and as common sense might dictate, economic concerns ultimately factor prominently in farmer decision-making. “As an organic grower, I feel like I already have the environmental and social stitched up as most others do as well that are in this field. We still don’t make enough money as many may think...It is the ‘middle marketers’...and the ‘packaging companies’ that make a majority of the profits in this industry today and always have!” In other words, small-scale organic growers who sell to local markets tend to come to farming because of environmental and social concerns, but the subsidy structure of industrial agriculture pressures those farmers to do whatever they can to make farming financially feasible.

*Research Question #2: Do farmers' market portfolios, that is, where farmers sell their products, relate solely to economic returns, or does social capital have a role?*

This question considers the ways in which farmers choose to diversify their operation. As the charts in Figure 5-3 show, most of the farmers I interviewed market their product through multiple channels. Diversification enables greater financial security, but also different opportunities for social engagement with consumers and with other farmers. The ways that farmers choose to diversify their operation depend on a number of factors, including their financial situation, the size of their operation, the amount of time they can devote to different markets, and their social priorities.

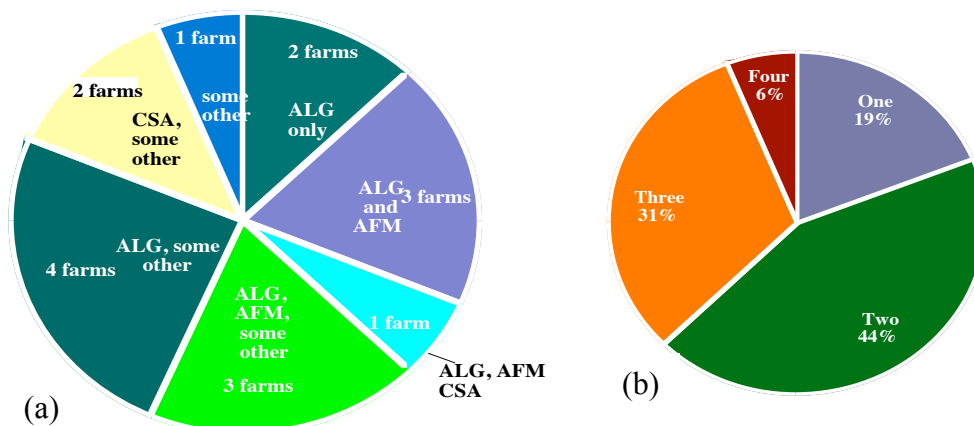


Figure 5-3: (a) Numerical breakdown of market portfolios and (b) Percentages of farms participating in multiple markets

As the Figure 5-3(b) demonstrates, most of the farmers I interviewed sell to more than one market, and more than a third sell to three or four markets. All of the AFM vendors I interviewed also sell through ALG, and commented that the two markets complement one another in terms of efficiency, year-long financial security, and even consumer commitment. While the AFM runs from May until November, ALG operates year-long, enabling farmers to continue earning income from the farm outside of the primary growing season.



Farmers who sell through both AFM and ALG report roughly equal earnings from the two markets during the summer season; however, farmers often preferentially direct a higher portion of their output to the weekly outdoor market, where they can benefit from a bountiful and attractive array of fresh produce. AFM vendors also reported that preparing for the weekly farmers' market is a deceptively arduous task; some who work full-time off-farm come home Friday evening to begin harvesting for the Saturday market, and only have a few hours to sleep before coming to the market the following morning. Market day typically demands at least eight hours of work—including packing the truck, driving to the market, setting up the stall, selling throughout the market, breaking down the stall, packing up and heading home—and NOT including the previous day's harvest—that one could justifiably question the urge to sell at the AFM at all, especially when equivalent money could be made selling through ALG, where growers simply drop off their pre-ordered items and return home with a check.

The Saturday AFM, more than any other distribution model, facilitates social interaction among growers and between growers and their customers. Farmers value the opportunity to alternately commiserate or celebrate with fellow growers, to see what others are growing and how, or to share ideas about how to improve the quality of the market to draw more customers. As one farmer, Dylan, noted, "The [AFM] market really does connect farmers to one another. Everyone walks around and socializes, networks, talks about how to make the market better."

The social atmosphere of the farmers' market also served to generate meaningful interaction between producers and consumers. Many farmers commented on the need to educate consumers about the "true cost of food", and reveled at the chance to convert a

customer by appealing to their taste buds and offering them a product they've worked hard to provide. Again, farmer Dylan commented on interacting with customers at the AFM: "It's a neat feeling. You work hard to grow things...you know exactly where you're giving that person, and to have someone like it feels good."

Through the farmers' market, growers were able to establish regular customers that placed a high value on coming to know the person who grew their food. These relationships often extended beyond the AFM season and into the ALG market; the ALG manager reported to me that membership in ALG grew tremendously during and after the first season of the AFM, due, presumably, in large part to AFM growers telling their customers about ALG whenever they lamented about the big hole that would be left in their appetites after the farmers' market went away for the winter.

Farms participating in CSA also voluntarily emphasized the importance of social relationships to the success of their CSA operations. Farmer Sara, who runs Roots Farm commented that "many of our CSA members are folks that we know, because a lot of the people that we know and that we hang out with are also people that are interested in the same things that we're interested in, local food being one of those things." While Roots Farm's CSA places special emphasis on developing relationships with its members, CSA operations vary considerably, and the three in Athens are indeed quite different. However, to varying degrees, they all provide opportunities for members to connect with the farm and farmers in multiple and meaningful ways, whether through member potlucks, farm work-days, or weekly on-farm share pickups. These activities all serve to galvanize loyalties, not just to particular farms, but also to local food in general.

To summarize, yes, market portfolio does demonstrate a grower's preference for social considerations, especially in the case of AFM vendors, who may choose to distribute through the market despite added time and labor costs. The decision to diversify, in terms of both production and distribution, is grounded in a desire for greater financial security and for meaningful and varied social interaction.

*Research Question #3: Do concepts from social capital help to explain the viability of small-scale agricultural production and distribution?*

Social capital provides a useful framework for considering local food projects and for enabling their continued viability. By utilizing concepts from social capital to examine the markets in which growers participate and their reasons for doing so, one can glean a sense of their personal social and economic priorities, and the variety of needs that are met through different market structures. This investigation of a diverse array of producers who all cater to a similar local market enabled the emergence of a few important themes related to social capital and local small-scale agriculture. Specifically, these themes are collaboration, community, resistance and resilience; combined, these themes demonstrate how social capital is mobilized and operationalized in a local food context and, in turn, how social considerations can affect the continued viability of local food projects.

### ***Collaboration***

In Chapter 2, I presented an argument from social capital theory that established social and exchange linkages can serve to reduce the “transaction costs” associated with “formal coordination mechanisms” (Fukuyama 2001:8). Furthermore, in market contexts such as the ones examined in this study, social capital can be particularly useful for linking

producers and consumers and for facilitating an easy flow of information amongst and between them (Halpern 2005).

Evidence from this study bore out those arguments. Growers I spoke with generally reported that their “local network of farmers” is more cooperative than competitive, and that there is a good deal of trust and collaboration amongst farmers. One farmer remarked, “We count on each other...We don’t try to be competitive with nobody. You need a lot of different people working together.” That statement demonstrates that, unlike many other businesses or industries, small-scale organic farming—as a conscientious alternative to conventional agriculture—requires that its practitioners work together to promote their practices and expand their market reach. As long as growers are held to a high standard of quality, existing growers are eager to welcome newcomers to the market; especially in the case of the AFM, growers understand the appeal of a large and bountiful farmers’ market for attracting more customers. Growers are generally optimistic that the market for local food is expanding, and they want to be able to not only meet that demand, but also to encourage it to continue to grow. Farmer Sara from Roots Farm articulated the sentiment of many: “I think that there is such a good market here. The more farmers we can get, the better. I don’t think that we’ve exhausted our market at all.”

### ***Community***

Notions of community are prevalent in both the social capital and the agrofoods literatures. Proponents of localized food systems argue that such systems foster the development of strong community ties, because they inherently create linkages between producers and consumers, and because they generally rely upon closely-bounded networks for the exchange of products, money, ideas, and information. From the perspective of the

producers, being a part of a vibrant local food economy enables the creation of both new relationships and new concepts of their own various roles within their communities.

As Farmer Sara explained, “A lot of my social network now is based on the fact that I’m a farmer and that I know other farmers...It’s hard for me to divide myself from the part of me that grows food now.” At Roots Farm, where Sara is a full-time farmer, she also finds great satisfaction in the farm’s weekly vegetarian potlucks, which bring together a diverse assemblage of community members to share in the enjoyment of farm-fresh fare and good company. Many of the potluck regulars are also CSA members who take delight not only in knowing the person who grew their food, but also in the opportunity to share that food with their farmer, on the very land where it was grown.

Farmers Tim and Alice are proud to host an annual brunch at their farm that serves as a fundraiser for the Classic City Chefs and Cooks Association, the local chapter of the American Culinary Federation. The event draws more people each year; in 2008, over 300 community members came to the farm to enjoy a gourmet brunch and the opportunity to see the mule-(and human)-powered farm in action. Tim and Alice have a deep appreciation for the support of their community, which has enabled them to pursue their calling to farm full-time.

Notions of community also refer, in social capital theory, to concepts of *closed or open networks*. In Chapter 2, I presented arguments for and against the “boundedness” of networks for generating social capital; while some argue that tightly-knit or “closed” networks are more effective for generating social capital, others argue that social capital is increasingly important in open networks characterized by weak ties. In the case of the local food economy of Athens, Georgia, both types of networks are necessary for producers to

successfully market their goods and sustain their chosen lifestyle. A tight network of farmers facilitates easy flow of information and ideas amongst those growers, but while farmers eagerly refer to the advice of others in their network, all of the producers I spoke with supplement that resource with independent research, mostly from the Internet. On the other hand, farmers rely upon networks that are not entirely bounded; in order for local agriculture to remain viable and its products accessible to a wider range of the population, producers count on new and diverse customers entering the network of “local food consumers.” As consumers enter this network and are eager to continue supporting its success, producers often come to develop special relationships with them, thus strengthening both “network ties” and community relationships.

### ***Resistance***

The theme of resistance draws most heavily from the agrofoods literature, although social capital theory also emphasizes a tendency of tightly bound social networks to form in resistance to some commonly opposed event or ideology. While people come to farming for a variety of reasons, the decision to farm organically is, in most cases, a politically and ideologically-driven commitment. The farmers I interviewed were keenly aware of the state of conventional industrial agriculture, and a number of them farm explicitly in opposition to that norm, which they consider to be environmentally destructive, economically unsustainable and socially moribund.

Farmer Todd expressed this sentiment most emphatically:

“Corporate farms have beaten down every farmer to the point where they can’t make a living... We’re watching farming in America die at the hands of corporate monsters who are all about profit and destroying our food chain... People who are recognizing the problem are pursuing an alternative: clean food, locally grown, without fossil fuels to transport it.”

While not all farmers were so explicitly distrusting of industrial or “corporatized” agriculture, most acknowledged that their personal versions of agriculture were substantially different—by design—from conventional models. While Todd acknowledged that his view was heavily informed by his politics as well as his personal standards for health and safety, others resist conventional agriculture primarily because of nutritional concerns, or simply because they believe in the virtue of small family farms.

Farmers Kim and Ed at Sundance Family Farm are confident that raising their three children on 28 acres of vegetable gardens, goat pasture, chicken and turkey houses, apple and pear orchards, muscadine vineyards, woods and creeks, instills in the children values of hard work, proper nutrition and personal responsibility (and also ensures that they are eating well). In this case and in so many others, the choice to farm was a conscious choice about how to live, how to raise a family, and how to grow a movement.

### ***Resilience***

The notion of resilience in a local food system flows logically from concepts of resistance, described above. Despite the difficulties inherent in this type of farming—financial insecurity, high labor demands, and a fragile market—farmers rely upon their social relationships and other strategies for making viable their chosen lifestyle.

Much of the success of the 21<sup>st</sup> century small-scale organic farmer depends upon a strong and well-informed consumer base. Farmer Russell can compare his own experience to

his grandparents who “starved to death” in the 1930s trying to farm on the same land that Russell’s cows graze today. Although Russell has noticed a “growing recognition, by the consumer, of the value of a locally-produced item,” in some ways, small-scale farming is even less viable today than it was two generations ago. Because of subsidies to large agribusiness, the profit margins for small farmers can be prohibitively small; if customers are not aware of the subsidy system or do not place a high priority on the qualities of locally-produced food, producers may have to invest extra time and energy towards educating and informing the customer base. Such effort requires serious commitment and devotion on the part of the grower. To make it work, Russell explained, “You have to love this life.”

Another resiliency strategy farmers employ is the establishment of regular and reliable consumer bases. A strong community presence clearly facilitates this process. Farmer Boo, who has been selling his produce in Athens for twenty years, has established a reputation with several local restaurants, which provides a strong sense of security for Boo and his wife Becky; when asked whether they could farm in Athens if the AFM and ALG did not exist, Becky easily replied that they could create their own market. “Because he’s been doing this so long,” she reasoned, the couple could rely on their community connections to assure the continued viability of their farming business.

Finally, farmers can add security to their businesses by diversifying their operation and their market distribution. Because they can offer milled products (a specialty offered by no other local producer), Farmers Tim and Alice have been able to sell to a wide range of restaurants and other businesses that may be less inclined to seek them out for produce. Once they have established relationships based on these specialty items, producers may be more successful at selling other products as well.



Farmers Russ and Christel's use of the *holon* concept—which envisions a holistic approach to agriculture and marketing, in which a diversified operation enables all parts of the system to contribute something beneficial to the whole—is an example of conscientious diversification. Christel explains that if she can get a particular customer accustomed to buying her eggs, and she forms a relationship with that person based on that exchange, she could make the most of that relationship by offering other items—such as cheese, chickens, bread, etc. The same concept can be expanded to the market level, where a number of growers selling together could conceivably expand their consumer reach by offering a greater diversity of products.

This chapter has demonstrated the different ways in which farmers' social relationships influence the viability of their farming operations. At the same time, it becomes clear that an individual's role as a farmer has profound implications both for his or her sense of self and for the roles that he or she plays in the community. As farmers negotiate and develop these relationships, they take conscious steps towards expanding the breadth and the influence of the local food movement they have helped to create.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

Utilizing social capital theory and models from agrofood studies, I designed this research to describe a particular network of local food producers in Athens, Georgia, and to situate their product-distribution strategies within the context of social relationships, cultural setting, and individual and group priorities. This final chapter will recount major findings from the research and will consider avenues for future research that can draw on those findings.

### **Summary of findings**

Athens' diverse opportunities for small-scale food producers to distribute their product to the greater community afford them greater access to both financial security and to opportunities for meaningful social interaction. At the same time, it is valuable for farmers to develop strong social relationships if they wish to realistically entertain the aspiration of farming successfully at the local level.

#### *The importance of social relationships*

While large-scale or industrial agriculture may find its strength in anonymity and the ability to enshroud some of its more unsavory practices in pursuit of the economic bottom line, local agriculture's emphasis is, in contrast, on transparency, trust, and community, in addition to economic considerations. The unique structure of local food economies, such as the one studied here, encourages participating producers to work collaboratively and collectively toward common ideals of sustainability, sovereignty, accessibility, and

accountability. Without a strong and cooperative network connecting producers to one another and to present and potential consumers, the viability of small-scale organic agriculture is severely compromised.

In this particular network of food producers, farmers rely on social capital in a variety of ways. Farmers' familiarity with one another enables easy flow of information and ideas on everything from pest management to crop selection, marketing strategies and community events. Farmers also draw on stores of social capital to distribute their products to restaurants and groceries, which are more likely to purchase from farmers they know and trust. The same is true of the reciprocal relationships that develop between farmers and their regular customers in any one of the three markets discussed in this study. Farmers who can successfully establish connections with customers at the AFM are likely to keep them as customers when they switch to ALG in the fall; farmers who operate a CSA during the summer are likely to see their members' names on ALG orders during the winter. Farming for a local market may be as much or more about sowing fruitful relationships as it is about producing food.

#### *Diversity at all levels*

As this particular network demonstrates, producers can benefit from diversity; a diverse range in the skill, interest, and personal history of a group of farmers contributes to their collective strength. A diverse array of market opportunities increases security by fomenting strategic relationships, meeting social and economic needs, and enhancing the likelihood that a farmer's product will find an appropriate and appreciative outlet. While farmers may prefer one market over another, for a variety of reasons, farmers participating in

multiple markets (such as AFM and ALG) feel that those markets compliment each other in a number of ways; while the weekly summertime AFM allows growers to connect with the customers and other community members, the web-based ALG market enables farmers to grow and sell year-round through a convenient and efficient method.

Diversity is also important at the market-level. A greater diversification in overall production within the network of growers may require particular growers to strategically specialize in certain items so that, collectively, they can offer a greater variety of items; this sort of specialization would need to arise from courteous conversation and consideration among the growers. In a community of growers that is demonstrably cooperative, such collaborative marketing may be feasible and profitable.

Finally, a diverse assemblage of internal and external network linkages facilitates a local food economy that is robust and dynamic. The network that connects growers must be strong and durable—to encourage collaboration and information sharing—but it must also have porous boundaries to meet the changing needs of a growing and diverse market. Farmers in this network rely greatly on one another’s knowledge and experience, but also on external information sources and independent research. They rely on strong community ties and strategic alliances with groups and individuals that can advance their cause; the network of growers benefits from positive relationships with organizations such as PLACE, UGA Cooperative Extension, SlowFood Athens, and the Athens Food Policy Council, which all strive to increase the presence and potential of local agriculture in and around Athens.

### **Avenues for future research**

This grower-centric examination of the local food system in Athens, Georgia suggests the need for a future consideration of the multiple stakeholders that participate in that system. Future research should investigate the diverse contributions, priorities, concerns, and network relationships among producers, consumers, restaurant-owners and chefs, local business-owners, local food activists and community organizers, local government, and other community organizations. By engaging diverse stakeholders, future research could address concerns of unequal or inadequate access to nutritious food (a situation commonly referred to as “food deserts”), as well as other consequences of racial, economic, and social discrimination. Formal network analysis could demonstrate the diverse webs that coalesce around food production, distribution, and consumption in a local economy, and could further verify the complex relationships that emerge from or validate a strong local food culture.

This study has demonstrated the importance of social relationships and a diverse market structure to the development and maintenance of a viable local food economy. Such a finding could be utilized to encourage community leaders and food activists to initiate dialogue and seek partnerships with leaders from groups currently under-represented in the movement toward a more localized food system. By engaging with individuals and groups that represent Athens’ social, cultural and economic diversity, advocates for a more just and sustainable local food system may see their vision realized in a variety of creative and as-yet-unimagined manifestations. At this stage, it is essential for all people interested in relocalizing the food system to focus their energies and attention on creating a food system that is local, safe, clean, nutritious, and, most importantly, *accessible* to *all* individuals,

families, and groups that are part of one's wider community. This sort of accessibility is possible only when committed individuals endeavor to span social and economic bridges to engage in meaningful and constructive dialogue.

A long-term investigation of the development and evolution of Athens' particular local food economy should consider the various spaces in which social capital facilitates or promotes local food initiatives, but also the places where social ties conflict with or impede the movement. Ongoing research could investigate the effects of network evolution (or dissolution) on local food systems. Such research would contribute to our understanding of the long-term viability of localized food systems by identifying and promoting potentially crucial network linkages.

As global economies shift amid seemingly inevitable tectonic forces, an increasing number of people are seeking out alternative economic and social systems that are accessible, manageable, and sustainable. Rising global food prices, scares related to contaminated foods, concerns about harmful pesticides and the environmental impacts of factory and industrial farming have all encouraged an emergent alternative agricultural system to enter the mainstream. As this research has demonstrated, strong local and community partnerships that prioritize equitable access to "real food, clean food"—as one of our local farmers put it—can ensure the continued renaissance of local agriculture, and the promotion of food systems that are truly democratic, socially and economically viable, and vibrant manifestations of the public good.

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## **APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### *Personal Information: (Face Sheet)*

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Occupation(s)
  - a. Full or part time?
4. Family structure
  - a. Single/Married/Divorced
  - b. Children
5. Farm acreage
  - a. In production?
6. Product(s)
  - a. Do you specialize in any particular products?
7. Ownership and residence:
  - a. Do you live on the farm that you work?
  - b. Do you own the farm that you work on?

### *I. Personal history: Farming*

8. How long have you been farming?
  - a. In Athens?
  - a. Elsewhere?
9. What made you want to farm?
10. How did you learn to farm? (Or, “who taught you to farm?”)

### *II. Market demand, and market selection*

11. How do you sell your product? (Farmers’ Market, CSA, Locally Grown, restaurants, etc)
12. Why did you choose this/these method(s) for selling your product?
13. Which method or market do you like best? (Please explain)
  - a. ...for economic purposes?
  - b. ...for social purposes?
14. Do you think there is a strong market for your product?
  - a. Is the market for your product increasing?
15. How do you market your product?
16. How has this/these market structure(s) affected your life...
  - a. ...economically?
  - b. ...socially?
17. Would you (could you) farm if these markets were not available?
18. Do you see any flaws or areas for improvement with these markets?
  - a. What changes could make farming more viable?
19. Can you describe the market for your product? (Is there a “typical consumer”?)

20. What would you consider to be your “local” market base?

### *III. Social capital amongst farmers*

21. How do you think area farmers get along? (Are farmers in your network normally competitive or cooperative?)

22. How well do you know other area farmers?

23. How would you describe your relationship with other farmers in the area?

a. Have you ever called another farmer to ask advice?

i. Who did you call?

b. Have you ever called someone else (other than another local farmer) to ask for help or advice on your farm?

i. Who?

c. Has another farmer ever called you to ask advice?

i. Who called you?

d. Would you trust another farmer’s advice?

i. Whose advice would you be most willing to accept?

e. Are you aware of any formal networks for sharing farming knowledge in the area

i. Are there informal networks that you utilize?

24. Do you share tools with other farmers?

a. Which farmers and which tools?

25. Have you ever visited other farms?

a. Which ones? Why?

26. Have other farmers visited your farm?

a. Which ones? Why?

27. How often do you socialize with other farmers?

a. At the market?

b. Outside the market in which you sell?

28. Do your relationships or friendships with other farmers protect you against uncertainty or risk?

a. In what way(s)?

29. Do you exchange your product for another farmer’s product?

a. What do you exchange and with whom?

b. Where does this usually happen?

30. Has farming shaped your role in your community?

a. In what ways?

31. Do you see that role changing in the future?

a. In what ways?

### *IV. Economic considerations*

32. Do you practice organic agriculture?

a. Why or why not?

b. Is your farm certified organic? Why or why not?

33. Where do you get your seeds?

34. How mechanized would you say your farming is?

- a. Do you own or use a tractor?
- 35. Do you break even annually?
- 36. About how many hours do you work per day?
  - a. In the summer?
  - b. In the winter?
- 37. What kind of help do you have on the farm?
  - a. Number of workers on the farm?
  - b. Volunteer or paid? Interns?



## **APPENDIX B: SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FOR CSA**

1. How many years have you participated in CSA?
2. How many members do you have (this year)?
  - a. How does this compare to previous years?
3. Would you consider your CSA operation to be successful?
4. Do members work on the farm with you?
  - a. How many work?
  - b. How regularly do they work?
  - c. What kind of work do they do?
  - d. How much work (hours per week or month) do they work, on average?
5. Do you change what you grow based on member response? (Do members have a say in what you decide to grow?)
6. Does operating a CSA protect your farm against risk? In what way(s)?

## **APPENDIX C: EMAIL WITH PRELIMINARY THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

*The text reprinted below was sent in an email to participating farmers several days before the scheduled interview.*

DEAR \_\_\_\_\_,

I wanted to send along a few questions to give you a sense of what I'll be asking during the interview. here are a few of the topics I'd like to cover:

1. Your personal experience with farming: How you came to farming, how long you have been farming, who taught you to farm, etc.
2. Market structure and economic considerations: What do you farm? Why? How and where do you sell your product? If you sell through morethan one market or method, which do you like best and why?
3. Social capital: Has farming affected your role in the community? In what ways? Describe your relationships with other farmers in the area (are they cooperative or competitive?). Who do you go to when you have aproblem or need help? To what extent has farming enabled you to develop new relationships? Explain the nature of these.

As you might expect, I'll have a number of more specific questions, but these should give you a better sense of my general purpose in conducting these interviews. Generally, I'm interested in how Athens' diverse market opportunities for farmers affect farmers' social and economic well-being.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,  
Catarina Passidomo

## APPENDIX D: ATHENS FARMERS' MARKET VENDOR APPLICATION WITH RULES AND REGULATIONS

### **Athens Farmers Market Vendor Application 2009 GROWER**

Version 3.6.09.1

Application must be received by April 3 for participation in first market day on May 9.  
Applications from 2008 Members must be received by March 31 for priority review.

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| [For admin. use] | Date completed application received: _____<br>Date Submitted to Jury: _____<br>Jury Decision <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No    Date: _____<br>Date Applicant Informed: _____<br>Comments: _____<br>_____<br>_____ |
|------------------|---|

#### **Applicant Information**

Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

|               |        |      |       |          |
|---------------|--------|------|-------|----------|
| Number/Street | County | City | State | Zip Code |
|---------------|--------|------|-------|----------|

Phone # (s) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail(s) \_\_\_\_\_

If you have a web site or web page, please provide your URL: \_\_\_\_\_  
(for link on AFM website)

List **all** persons who may be staffing your farmers market stand:

| <b>*Name</b> | <b>*Phone</b> | <b>*Relationship to you</b><br><small>(self, spouse, employee, etc.)</small> |
|--------------|---------------|--|
| _____        | _____         | _____  |
| _____        | _____         | _____  |
| _____        | _____         | _____  |
| _____        | _____         | _____  |
| _____        | _____         | _____  |
| _____        | _____         | _____  |
| _____        | _____         | _____  |

List types of produce you grow and sell at the Athens Farmers Market, but not varieties (i.e., Tomatoes, but not Brandywine, Big Boy, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where do you grow the products you plan to sell? Please list all addresses, including counties, that apply (if different from address given above).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Required Permits and Licenses (copies must accompany application)**

GA State UBI # \_\_\_\_\_

Food Handler Permit # [required to serve food or samples] \_\_\_\_\_

GADA Food Processor's License# [for preserved foods] \_\_\_\_\_

Health Dept Approved Kitchen # [for processed or preserved foods] \_\_\_\_\_

Kitchen Address \_\_\_\_\_

Other Permits applicable to your business \_\_\_\_\_

---

## **Membership Type**

Please indicate whether you are requesting full season membership (\$275), or using your best guesstimate, circle individual dates (\$18 per date) that you request a space.

- ☐ Full Membership (\$275) entitles you to participate on any and all Saturdays for the entire season and all the rights of Full Membership
- ☐ Associate Membership (\$18 per Saturday) entitles you to participate on selected Saturdays, if space is available

## **Attendance Plan**

Regardless of your membership type, please indicate which Saturdays you intend to participate in the farmers market:

☐ I intend to participate in every Saturday of the 2009 season

☐ I intend to participate ONLY on the Saturday's checked below:

- |                                 |                                  |                                  |                                 |                                  |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> May 9  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 6  | <input type="checkbox"/> July 4  | <input type="checkbox"/> Aug 1  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sept 5  | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct 3  | <input type="checkbox"/> Nov 7  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> June 13 | <input type="checkbox"/> July 11 | <input type="checkbox"/> Aug 8  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sept 12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Nov 14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May 23 | <input type="checkbox"/> June 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> July 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> Aug 15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sept 19 | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct 17 |                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> June 27 | <input type="checkbox"/> July 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Aug 22 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sept 26 | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct 24 |                                 |
|                                 |                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Aug 29  |                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Oct 31  |                                 |                                 |

### **NOTES:**

Associate (weekly) Members:

1. Market fees are due by Friday of the week preceding your first market reservation (8 days before your first market reservation).
2. If fees are not received on time, your reservation will be cancelled.
3. Your weekly fee will be refunded or applied to later reservations if you notify the Market Manager via e-mail or telephone no later than the Wednesday during the week of your market reservation by 9 PM (3 Days before your market reservation)

Full Members:

1. Full Membership Fee is due April 15.
2. If you are unable to pay the full amount by April 15, please contact Jerry NeSmith via e-mail. (Jerry.NeSmith@AthensFarmersMarket.net)
3. If you must miss a market that you have reserved, as a courtesy, please notify the Market Manager as soon as possible.

## **Affirmation**

I have read, initialed each page and affirm my agreement with all Rules and Regulations of the Athens Farmers Market and to support our common efforts.

I affirm that all statements made and information provided by me in this Application are true and correct.

Sign and Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Application with initialed copy of Rules and Regulations to:

Athens Farmers Market Application  
210 Deerhill Drive  
Bogart, GA 30622

For questions or additional information contact

Jay Payne at (706) 759-3710 e-mail [jay.payne@athensfarmersmarket.net](mailto:jay.payne@athensfarmersmarket.net)

Jerry NeSmith (706) 248-3547 or [jerry.nesmith@athensfarmersmarket.net](mailto:jerry.nesmith@athensfarmersmarket.net)

**Rules and Regulations of the Athens Farmers Market, LLC, (AFM) for  
the 2009 Season**

**A. Market Schedule and Location**

The market will be open for sales every Saturday from May 9, 2009, through November 14, 2009, from 8AM until 12 Noon at Bishop Park in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. In case of severe weather, the market opening time may be delayed or cancelled.

**B. Products Offered for Sale**

- 1) Growers are required to use sustainable farming methods to be affirmed by signing an affidavit and agreeing to allow farm inspections. The guidelines for the market's requirements for sustainable farming are as described by "Certified Naturally Grown", an alternative certification program that follows the rules set forth by the National Organic Program (NOP). Formal certification of a grower by USDA or Certified Naturally Grown is not required, though encouraged.
- 2) Agricultural products offered for sale at the market shall be grown by the Member only at location(s) in the counties cited in Article IV of the AFM bylaws (and listed below) and sold at the market by the Member or approved representative of the Member authorized by the Member and approved by the Board of Directors.

Athens-Clarke, Banks, Barrow, Dawson, Elbert, Forsyth, Franklin, Greene, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Jackson, Jasper, Lincoln, Lumpkin, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, Walton, Wilkes or White counties in the state of Georgia.

- 3) Arts and craft shall be fabricated by the Member at location(s) in the counties cited in Article IV of the AFM Bylaws, as listed above:
- 4) Prepared food shall be prepared in compliance with all local laws and regulations by the Member at a location in the counties cited in Article IV of the AFM Bylaws (listed above) and composed of substantial ingredients derived from organically grown or Naturally Grown products and approved by the Board of Directors.

### **C. Membership Fees**

- 1) Full Membership for 2009 is \$275. Full Membership allows the Member to sell at the market for the entire season in a space assigned by the Market Manager.
- 2) Associate Membership for 2009 is \$18 per Saturday. Associate Membership allows the Member to sell at the market on Saturdays that are mutually agreeable to the Member and the Board of Directors.

### **D. Market Space Occupancy**

- 1) Space Assignments - Space assignments shall be made by the Market Manager each Saturday morning. The Market Manager may require a Member to move from one space to another at any time for any reason.
- 2) If available and agreed to by the Board of Directors, an additional space may be secured for \$300. A third space will be secured for \$250 with a three space total limit.
- 3) No member shall sublease, sell or permit anyone to use his or her space for any purpose.
- 4) Applicants who had annual (Full Membership) in 2008 will be required to file a new application for the current year. Their applications will be considered before any applications from others are considered. The fact that an application was approved for one year does not guarantee approval in the subsequent year.

### **E. Application and Fee Deadlines**

- 1) Applications from Members of the previous year must be submitted no later than March 31 of the next year in order to be considered as priority before applications from new applicants are considered.
- 2) Membership fees must be paid in full before April 15, or the Board's approval will be withdrawn, and the application will be considered along with new applications.
- 3) Applications may be submitted at any time during the season, except that consideration for Full Membership will end for 2009 on August 17, 2009. After that date, applications for Associate Membership will be considered through the duration of the 2009 market season.

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- 3) After May 9, 2009, applications for Full or Associate Membership must include full payment--\$275 for Full Membership and \$18 per reserved market date for Associate Membership. (Checks will only be deposited if an application is accepted by the Board, and will be returned to any applicant whose application is denied or withdrawn.)

**F. Fee Payment, Cancellation and Saturday Member and Associate Member Arrival**

- 1) Not later than Friday (8 days before market reservation)--Associate Member's weekly fee must be paid to AFM, or reservation will be cancelled.
- 2) Not later than Wednesday, 9:00 PM (3 days before market reservation)--Associate Members who wish to cancel their reservation by informing the Market Manager by phone or e-mail or Associate Member weekly fees for that market date will *not* be refunded.
- 2) 7:15 AM Saturday--Unreserved spaces will be made available by the Market Manager to qualified Members and Associate Members ready to set up.
- 3) Not later than Saturday, 7:30 AM--Members and Associate Members with space reservations should arrive and check in with the Market Manager.
- 4) 7:45AM Saturday--Unused reserved spaces may be made available by the Market Manager to qualified Members or Associate Members ready to set up.

**G. What Can Be Sold**

- 1) Raw Agricultural Products--This category includes fruits, vegetables, grains, herbs, flowers, bedding plants and potted plants. The Member must grow from seed, plugs, cuttings, bulbs, bareroots, and bedding or potted plants. No resale of pre-finished plants is allowed.
- 2) Value-added Agricultural Products--This category includes products made of raw agricultural products grown by the Member that have been processed or any whose sale a government agency regulates. Examples are jams, jellies, sauces, oils, vinegars, baked goods, molasses, cider and picked-out nuts. The value-added product must contain significant material grown or produced by the seller. Exceptions include goods that cannot be grown locally such as coffee or tea, but the production of these goods must include substantial processing by the Member at location(s) listed in Article III. Sellers must abide by all applicable federal, state and local health

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regulations. In addition, they must adhere to federal guidelines on all labels. Products in this category must be fully described in the Members' application and approved by the Board.

- 3) Non-agricultural Products--This category includes farm, garden, or food related crafts and value-added agricultural products made without raw agricultural products grown by the Member. Examples include: baked goods, juried arts and crafts, handmade soap, lotions, handcrafted furniture, other garden related products, pottery and similar items. The member selling them must have created these items. These products are admitted at the discretion of the Board, for members in good standing only. All labeling, packaging, preparation, handling and dispensing must be in compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations.
- 4) Arts and Crafts--Arts and Crafts must be handcrafted by the Member, be original and exhibit a high level of quality and design. Products not allowed include those made from kit assembly and direct resale of commercially available products. Reformulating or repackaging of commercially prepared products or bases must demonstrate significant added value, as determined by the Board.
- 5) Meat and Other Animal Products-- This category includes meats, poultry, milk, cheese, eggs, farm-raised fish, honey, wool, leather, and other products derived from animals. Members must abide by all applicable federal, state and local regulations and inspection regimes. In addition, they must adhere to federal or state guidelines on all labels. No live animals are to be sold at the market. All preparation, handling and dispensing must be in compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations.
- 6) Displays and Samples: Food products can be cut or opened for displays at the market if properly wrapped, but they cannot be sold. Free samples may be given to customers in accordance with all applicable Health Department regulations.
- 7) Members may sell only their own products as per the Bylaws, Rules and Regulations of the AFM. The resale of any products that are not grown or produced by the Member as listed in the Members' application are strictly forbidden. Violators of this rule will be expelled from the market without refund of any fees. Participants wishing to return to the market following expulsion must apply to the Board of Directors for re-admittance

## **H Pricing**

- 1) Each Member may set his or her own prices. Prices should be set in keeping with customer satisfaction and consideration of other market Members.
- 2) Any grievance regarding the actions or prices of the other Members should not be directed to the Member in question. The initial grievance should be reported to the Market Manager who will bring it to the attention of the Board of Directors. The Board will determine if the issue is substantive enough for Board's intervention.
- 3) Each Member is required to provide scales of demonstrative accuracy, money for change and to post a list of items for sale and their prices in full view of the consuming public.

## **I Market Operations**

- 1) No product may be sold, distributed or bagged by customers until opening time. One hour will be allowed for finishing sales and clean up after closing time.
- 2) It is the responsibility of individual Members to maintain a clean and healthful condition within their assigned area and to leave that area free of debris. Products should be displayed in an attractive manner.
- 3) AFM requires members to truthfully represent their products and operations. Any complaint from a customer about product representation will be investigated for a timely response to the customer. Deliberate or repetitive misrepresentation of a product or operation will result in expulsion of the Member from the market.
- 4) Inappropriate language or behavior, including profanity, harassment or abuse by a Member or participant toward another Member or participant, employee, or customer of the market is grounds for immediate expulsion from the market.
- 5) No pets are allowed in the market area except service animals.
- 6) All Members who wish to erect canopies [including umbrellas] on the Market site during the normal period of operations, including during set up and break down, are required to have their canopies properly anchored ground from the time their canopy is put up to the time it is taken down. Canopies of any type which are judged to be unsightly or unsafe by the Market Manager must be immediately removed.

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#### **J. Market Manager**

- 1) AFM employs or otherwise designates a Market Manager, whose duty shall be collecting daily fees, assigning market spaces, supervising the market and other duties assigned by the Board.
- 2) The Manager will report any violations of rules to the Board. The Manager will be final authority on the day of Market.
- 3) On any market day from two (2) hours before opening and one (1) hour after close, the Market Manager has on-site and unconditional authority to enforce all Rules and any contractual or legal obligations AFM has entered into. This may include, but is not limited to, terms for site lease established by the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, requirements for membership, regulations established by Georgia State Farmers' Market Association, and any other requirements established by federal, state and local regulatory agencies.
- 4) During Market hours or within one hour of market opening and closing, the Market Manager may convene an ad-hoc Rules Committee [consisting of no less than three (3) Board Members] to interpret Market Rules in relation to a specific situation.
- 5) Objections to decisions or actions by the Market Manager or an ad hoc Rules Committee may be appealed to the Board in writing for consideration at the next meeting of the Board of Directors.

#### **K. Miscellaneous**

- 1) The AFM and its Board of Directors are not responsible for product liability or the accounting for or paying of sales taxes for individual Members.
- 2) The AFM will not discriminate against anyone because of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, disability, or sexual orientation.
- 3) AFM does not engage in any political campaigning. Support of any political candidates or political issues displayed in Member booths does not reflect any position taken by Athens Farmers Market, LLC.
- 4) AFM reserves the right to inspect all production areas of any Member's place of production by appointment with three-days or more notice, as agreed upon as a condition of membership. Inspection may be conducted with or without cause. The primary purpose of a farm inspection will be to determine whether the Member is in fact producing all that he or she is

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selling at the market and is following natural and sustainable guidelines. A decision regarding the inspection shall be rendered by the Board within six (6) days of completion of inspection.

- 5) Refusal to allow inspection is grounds for indefinite suspension and possible expulsion from the Market with no refund of membership fees paid.
- 6) The AFM reserves the right to cancel the privileges of any Member who, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, has violated the rules governing the Market. Fees will not be refunded.



## **APPENDIX E: ATHENS LOCALLY GROWN NEW GROWER INFORMATION SHEET**

LocallyGrown.net — Athens Locally Grown

3/22/09 3:54 PM

### **Athens.LocallyGrown.net**

#### **Small Farms Making A Difference**

- [About](#)
- [The Market](#)
- [Weblog](#)
- [Q's and A's](#)
- [Our Growers](#)
- [Your Account](#)
- 
- 

#### **Create a Grower For This Market**

##### **General Information**

**1. What is the Grower's Business Name?**

Usually the farm's name (mine is "Boann's Banks"), this must be unique for this market.

Business Name:

**2. Where is this Grower Located?**

So your customers have a general idea of where thier orders are coming from. The town or county name will probably suffice.

Location:

**3. Does This Grower Have a Website?**

Enter the address here. If the grower does not have a website, may I suggest looking at another project of mine, [FarmNotebook.com](http://FarmNotebook.com)?

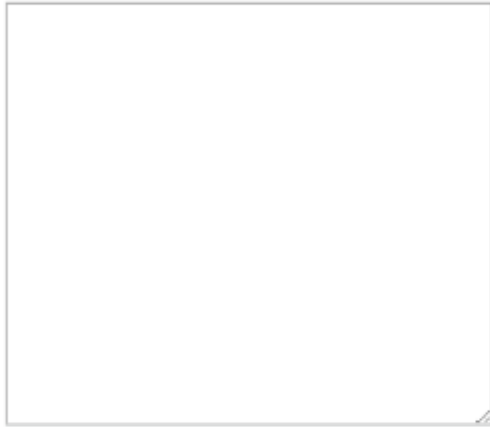
Website Address:

**4. Describe This Grower**

You'll want to come back and flesh this out, but for now, just give a general description of what this grower is all about.

Description





**5. Do You Want to Upload An Image?**

You can leave this blank, but if you have an image lying around you wish to display for this grower, upload it here. **Only image files are allowed** -- jpg, png, or gif files will work.

Image:  no file selected

**6. What is your ZIP or postal code?**

If you fill this info in, a marker will be placed on a map showing the general location of this grower. Customers won't be able to see the exact location, but will get a general idea of where their food is coming from.

ZIP / Postal Code:

**7. Should your own orders be taken out of your sales total?**

If you check this box, any orders placed by accounts tied to this grower will be automatically deducted from this grower's sales total.

Deduct own orders from sales: ☐

**8. Who should the checks be made out to?**

The market will collect payments from this grower's customers and then pass them along to the grower.

Pay to the order of:

**9. Can customers see your contact information?**

If you check this, logged in customers will be able to see your email address and phone number. This will enable them to ask you questions about your products, request special orders, pass along compliments, volunteer to work for you, and so forth. If you'd rather them not get in touch, leave it unchecked.

Public contact info: ☐

#### 10. **Finally, Describe The Grower's Growing Methods**

Many customers want to know how the growers do their growing. Some markets may not allow "conventional" growers to join the market.

USDA Certified Organic: ☐

Non-USDA Certified Organic: ☐

Certified Naturally Grown: ☐

Non-Certified Organic: ☐ (Includes Transitional Growers)

Conventional: **Not Allowed\***

Doesn't Apply: ☐

\* This market does not allow growers using synthetic fertilizers and/or pesticides to sell here.

[Add a new Grower](#)

We thank you for your interest and support of our efforts to bring you the healthiest, the freshest and the most delicious locally-produced foods possible.

This market is part of the [Locally Grown](#) Network. More information about how your market or farm can also use this system can be found at [www.locallygrown.net](http://www.locallygrown.net).

## **APPENDIX F: BASIC REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSING A SMALL EGG PRODUCER IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA**

(This document is intended to be a “Guideline” which describes in simple terms a number of basic requirements which must be met before licensing a small egg producer. For further assistance contact the District Office in your area.

### **BASIC REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSING A SMALL EGG PRODUCER**

The Georgia Egg Law governs the production and sale of eggs. The egg processing facility must be licensed by the Georgia Department of Agriculture unless selling restricted eggs. All eggs offered for sale must be graded by a certified grader and appropriately packaged and labeled in accordance to the Georgia Egg Law and Georgia Food Act, rules and regulations.

#### **Restricted Eggs:**

Restricted eggs include the sale of eggs from a producers own flock at the site of production, on a door-to-door retail route, or at an established place of business owned and managed by the producer and sold directly to a household consumer as the end user. Provided that each such sale of restricted eggs shall be limited to no more than 30 dozen eggs and from a flock of 3,000 hens or less. The eggs shall contain no more loss and/or leakers than allowed in the official standards for U.S. Consumer Grade B shell eggs.

The producers of these restricted eggs will be regulated by the Georgia Department of Agriculture but not required to obtain a Food Sales Establishment License. The eggs must be candled by a licensed candler and follow labeling, transporting, and storing/displaying requirements.

#### **Non-Restricted Eggs:**

Non-restricted eggs include the sale of eggs from a producer who intends to sell eggs to retail store (not owned and operated by producer), to a restaurant and/or institution, or to a facility/individual for further sale. This type of egg producer will be required to obtain a Food Sales Establishment License with the Georgia Department of Agriculture and must follow all guidelines in this document including the facility restrictions.



**Egg Grader's Certificate:**

A person must receive an egg grader's certificate (Candling License) to sell both restricted and non-restricted eggs. The individual must pass the written and candling examinations. The information on egg grading classes is available by calling the district office in your area (county where the operation will be located).

The list of district offices and counties is enclosed. On line study materials:

The Georgia Egg Law and Supporting Regulations:

[http://agr.georgia.gov/vgn/images/portal/cit\\_1210/9/20/120821208The%20Georgia%20Egg%20Law%20and%20Supporting%20Regulations.doc.pdf](http://agr.georgia.gov/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/9/20/120821208The%20Georgia%20Egg%20Law%20and%20Supporting%20Regulations.doc.pdf)

The USDA Federal Egg Grading Manual:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3016336>

District and Counties:

[http://agr.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,38902732\\_0\\_40972745,00.html](http://agr.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,38902732_0_40972745,00.html)

**Facilities:**

Receive approval from proper zoning authority for land use and comply with all other governing agencies.

Contact with the appropriate District Office is strongly recommended prior to the beginning of any construction.

A private home, a room used as living or sleeping quarters, or an area directly opening into a room used as living or sleeping quarters may not be used for conducting food establishment operations.

Living or sleeping quarters located on the premises of a food establishment shall be separated from rooms and areas used for food establishment operations by complete partitioning and solid self-closing doors.

**Facility Requirements:**

The area used to produce eggs must be approved by the Department before receiving a Food Sales Establishment License.

A refrigerator is required to store eggs prior to distribution. The refrigerator must maintain an ambient temperature of 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Pest Control:**

Adequate measures shall be in place to preclude contamination by insects, rodents, and other pests: within the area/physical facility and its contents; and on the contiguous land or property.

**Sinks:**

One sink with cold and hot running water is required.

**Water:**

Water shall be obtained from an approved public or private source.

The water source and system shall be of sufficient capacity and pressure to meet the water demands of food establishment.

**Hot Water:**

Hot water generation and distribution systems shall be sufficient to meet the peak hot water demands throughout the food establishment.

**Plumbing:**

A plumbing system shall be designed, constructed and installed according to local code.

Floor drains may be required under some conditions and shall be installed as regulations and local codes require.

A plumbing system and hoses conveying water shall be constructed and repaired with approved materials.

**Sewage:**

Sewage shall be disposed through an approved public or individual disposal system.

County or municipal sewer system evaluation may be required to approve a grease trap, or to allow an exemption.

### **Outside Premises:**

The premises shall be free of excessive vegetative growth and debris.

The outdoor walking and driving areas shall be surfaced with materials that minimize dust, facilitate maintenance, prevent muddy conditions, and shall be graded to drain.

Exterior surfaces of establishment buildings and associated structures shall be of weather-resistant materials.

### **Packaging & Labeling Requirements:**

The label should be affixed at the time of candling and packaging. The label must be at least 2" x 4" on a case and both case and carton should have letters not less than ¼ of an inch.

When eggs are sold in cartons, the cartons must show the date packed or an expiration date, which shall not exceed 45 days from the date packed and the grade and size, together with the name and address of the packer and safe handling instructions. The state of origin may also be given.

All packages of raw, shell eggs not treated to destroy Salmonella must carry the following safe handling statement:

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS:</b> To prevent illness from bacteria: Keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly.</p> |
|--|

The statement must appear on the label prominently, conspicuously, and in a type size no smaller than 1/16". The statement must appear in a hairline box with the words "safe handling instructions" in bold capital letters. This statement can be placed on the principal display panel (PDP), information panel or may be placed on the inside lid of egg cartons if the statement "Keep Refrigerated" appears on the principal display panel (PDP) or information panel.

### **40-3-1.01 Open Dating on Egg Cases and Egg Cartons.**

All eggs which are sold, offered for sale or stored for sale at retail or wholesale shall use an Open Date to express the packing date or expiration date.

#### **(a) Definitions.**

1. Open Date: Means the use of letters (for the month) together with number(s) (for the day of the month).

2. Pack Date: Means the date the eggs were washed, candled, and packed.

3. Expiration Date: Means the last date the eggs shall be sold at retail or wholesale.

(b) Manner of Expressing the Open Date: Open dating shall consist of a combination of three letters (for the month abbreviation) and number(s) for the day of the month. Example: JUN 10

(c) Manner of Expressing the Pack Date: A pack date shall be the use of an Open Date (as defined in 40-3-1-.01(b) of these Regulations) with no words, numbers, or letters preceding or following the Open Date. Example: JUN 10

(d) Manner of Expressing the Expiration Date: An Expiration Date shall be the use of an Open Date (as defined in 40-3-1-.01(b) of these Regulations) preceded by the abbreviation "EXP" (Example: EXP JUN 10) or the use of an Open Date (as defined in 40-3-1-.01(b) of these Regulations) preceded by the term "Sell By," (Example: Sell By JUN 10). The Expiration Date shall not exceed forty-five (45) days from the date the eggs were washed, candled, and packed.

(e) Prohibited Act: The following act and the causing thereof are hereby prohibited.

1. Eggs are not to be sold or offered for sale at retail or wholesale after the expiration date.

2. Eggs are not to be sold or offered for sale that do not meet the U.S. Standards, Grades, and Weight Classes for Shell Eggs Part 56, Subpart C. Paragraphs 56.216 and 56.217 established pursuant to the Federal Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946.

#### **Transportation and marketing of eggs:**

Eggs must be transported, stored and displayed in refrigerated equipment holding a temperature of 45 degrees Fahrenheit or below.