

Iowa Food System Plan Vocabulary

Talking about the food system involves terms that are not understood widely. We are providing definitions we refer to as we have developed the Iowa Food System Plan. We know our collective vocabulary will change and grow the deeper we reach into this work so expect this to be updated periodically.

Throughout - **Coalition** refers to the Iowa Food System Coalition. **Plan** refers to the Iowa Food System Plan.

TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Collective Impact - The framework the Coalition uses to guide development of Plan goals & action strategies

“the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.”

Common agenda

collectively define the problem and create a shared vision to solve it

Shared measures

Tracking progress in the same way, allowing for continuous learning and accountability

Mutually reinforcing activities

Integrating participants many different activities to maximize the end result

Encourages continuous communication

Building trust and strengthening relationships

Strong backbone

A team dedicated to aligning and coordinating the work of the group

Equity* - from the research and advocacy organization [Urban Strategies Council](#): *Equity is fairness and justice achieved through systematically assessing disparities in opportunities, outcomes, and representation and redressing [those] disparities through targeted actions.*⁴

5 points of centering equity in collective impact

1. Ground the work in data and context, and target solutions.
2. Focus on systems change, in addition to programs and services.
3. Shift power within the collaborative.
4. Listen to and act with the community.
5. Build equity leadership and accountability.

*(Source: [Collective Impact Forum](#))

Farm

Any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year.

(Source: www.nass.usda.gov,2022)

Food hub (Source: [USDA definition](#))

A centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products.

Food system

Used to refer to the system, processes, and relationships necessary to support Iowa-based producers, raising edible, table products for markets within and beyond Iowa.

Food systems comprise interrelated processes that include various social, political, environmental, economic and health interactions and outcomes, impacting diverse sets of individuals, businesses, and communities.(Source:Using Networks to Build Collaborative and Equitable Food Systems, Rich Pirog, Marcus Coleman, May 2023)

Local food

Often measured by geographic distance, there's much more to "local food" than miles. The definition should account for the system's ability to support core sustainability criteria and strengthen relationships of mutual support.

Local food is meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fruit and vegetables, grains, herbs,honey, and nuts grown or raised in Iowa, and marketed for human consumption in Iowa and its neighboring states (Minnesota, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and South Dakota). (source: 2011 Food & Farm Plan)

Here are a number of definitions to consider:

The definition of "local" can vary – eggs from the 4-H'er down the road, meat from a farmer in the next county, wine from a winery on the other side of the state, and cheddar cheese from a creamery in southwest Wisconsin – but in each case, there is an effort by the consumer to buy from the closest source. (Source: A Place to Grow, 2027)

A food product that is raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and

distributed in the locality or region in which the final product is marketed. Includes both direct-to-consumer sales AND intermediated sales by distributors/food hubs, To restaurants, grocery stores, schools/universities, hospitals, et. al.
(Source: USDA AMS - [Why Local Food Matters](#))

The 2008 Farm Act defines a “locally or regionally produced agricultural food product” as one that is marketed less than 400 miles from its origin.”

The Food Safety Modernization Act, enacted in January 2011, defines local as food purchased within 275 miles or the same state where it was produced
(Source for both previous definitions - [The Role of Food Hubs in Local Food Marketing](#), pg. 7)

Local & Regional food system - A system that focuses on processes related to food that is grown and marketed within a defined geographic area. Markets may include direct to consumer, institutional, and may be community based, within Iowa, or interstate to reach a larger consumer base.

According to

Kathryn Z. Ruhf & Kate Clancy, September 2022, in A Regional Imperative: the Case for Regional Food Systems, “...‘local’ and ‘regional’ are not the same and Conflating or confusing the terms prevents analysts and advocates from touting ‘local’ on its own merits, and from making the case for ‘regional’ food systems as strong as it could be.

“In food systems, ‘regional’ is larger geographically than ‘local,’ and also larger in terms of functions: volume, variety, supply chains, markets, food needs, land use, governance, and policy. A regional food system operates at various scales and geographies toward greater self-reliance..”

“Plan” - the Iowa Food System Plan guided by shared vision, values, and identified high priorities, grounded on a commitment to racial equity, and evaluated through shared measurement.

The priorities are developed into Goals, Strategies, Specific action plans, and supported by Priority Teams.

Priorities - of the many issues rooted in Iowa’s food system, the Coalition has identified the top issues to achieve the change we claim in our vision and values.

Strategic Actions - specific actions that inform how Coalition leaders will address identified priorities. These actions are backed with shared measures and an agreed upon timeline/plan of work.

Systems Change

Systems change comes about through confronting root causes of issues (rather than symptoms) by transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics, and policies, by strengthening collective power through the active collaboration of diverse people and organizations. This collaboration is rooted in shared goals to achieve lasting improvement to solve social problems at a local, national and global level.

(Source: [Catalyst 2030](#))

Value Chain Coordinator - Food value chains differ from typical food supply chains in that they are intentionally structured to produce both business success and social benefit. Value chain coordinators may play multiple roles in the development of food value chains, including: market match making, convener/relationship builder, resource prospector, policy thought leader, technical assistance provider, catalyst/innovator.

(Source: [FoodLinC](#))

- Excellent [resource on Value Chain Coordinator](#) (Source: Wallace Center at Winrock International)