

Public policy and planning for sustainability in the urban food system

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ABSTRACT

As a central and essential component of existence, food permeates our daily lives through our relationships with each other and our environments. Throughout the history of mankind, the acquisition, preparation, and eating of food has fostered patterns of work, cultural, and social organization. Over the course of several centuries, the conventional Western food system developed from a rather simplistic structure, of local small-scale production, to one of an increasingly diverse and fragmented character. As any trip to a supermarket will reveal, the dominant contemporary food system, functioning in the context of a globalised, mass-producing market, involves an incredibly complex set of participants and linkages to provide the almost unlimited variety of intensively processed, packaged, and fresh foods from every corner of the earth. For many years, the evolution, structure, and complexity of relationships in the conventional Western food systems has remained a subject of continuous research and debate (Beardsworth, 1997). While decentralisation and localisation of food systems to suit a particular community or ecosystem offers several advantages over the globalised conventional food system, western constructs thoroughly support and perpetuate the conceptualisation of agriculture and food as exclusively or primarily rural activities and issues and works against the idea of food systems in the metropolitan area. Exacerbating this dilemma, food-related programme and policy development for cities conventionally ignores food systems theory, employing a disconnected and disengaged approach in which various government departments and industry sectors create separate, potentially conflicting policy. To mediate the problems associated with this fragmentation of food policy, several local and regional government departments have created cross-sectoral councils to generate comprehensive, allied solutions to food issues within and surrounding urban areas. This systems approach facilitates the development of coordinated policy and programs such as local food guides, farm-to-school, and institutional purchasing, providing a unique and successful alternative to traditional, fragmented policy management while encouraging support for a more sustainable, localised food system.

INTRODUCTION

As a central and essential component of existence, food permeates our daily existence through our relationships with each other and our environments. Throughout the history of mankind, the acquisition, preparation, and eating of food has fostered patterns of work, cultural, and social organization. Over the course of several centuries, the conventional Western food system developed from a rather simplistic structure, of local small-scale production, to one of an increasingly diverse and fragmented character. As any trip to a supermarket will reveal, the dominant contemporary food system, functioning in the context of a globalised, mass-producing market, involves an incredibly complex set of participants and linkages to provide the almost unlimited variety of intensively processed, packaged, and fresh foods from every corner of the earth. For many years, the evolution, structure, and complexity of relationships in the conventional Western food systems has remained a subject of continuous research and debate (Beardsworth, 1997). While decentralisation and localisation of food systems to suit a particular community or ecosystem offers several advantages over the globalised conventional food system, western constructs thoroughly support and perpetuate

the conceptualisation of agriculture and food as exclusively or primarily rural activities and issues and works against the idea of food systems in the metropolitan area. Exacerbating this dilemma, food-related programme and policy development for cities conventionally ignores food systems theory, employing a disconnected and disengaged approach in which various government departments and industry sectors create separate, potentially conflicting policy. To mediate the problems associated with this fragmentation of food policy, several local and regional government departments have created cross-sectoral councils to generate comprehensive, allied solutions to food issues within and surrounding urban areas. This systems approach facilitates the development of coordinated policy and programs such as local food guides, farm-to-school, and institutional purchasing, providing a unique and successful alternative to traditional, fragmented policy management while encouraging support for a more sustainable, localised food system. This research examines structure of food councils and types of activities these entities create or facilitate in support of localized food systems with a discussion of the implications of this model for governance in urban areas of Australia.

Localising food systems to suit a particular community or ecosystem offers several advantages over the globalised conventional food system. Hird and Petts (2002) offer six key benefits of local food systems. The first three benefits focus explicitly on the three pillars of sustainability. Local food systems promote sustainable economic development through the creation of employment in environmentally sound activities, support for local farmers, and improved food access and affordability for the community. Food production and consumption systems in a local framework provide environmental benefits through reduction of the environmental damage, energy and resource use caused by long-distance transport, including packaging and storage, as well as through closing bioregional resource loops through recycling of food wastes. Public health benefits derive from increased availability, diversity, and affordability of fresh, less processed foods, especially fruits and vegetables. Through a reduction in storage time and emphasis on organic growing methods, local food often retains higher nutrient levels and less danger of detrimental health affects from agri-chemical residues. The three other primary areas of food systems benefits relate to community development, education, and land use. Focus on regional, seasonal foods and recipes and enrichment of food activities in the local environment fosters a greater sense of community and culture that crosses boundaries of gender, age, ethnicity, and class. Sustainable local food activities offer educational opportunities for all community members to learn about healthy diets, local ecology, and production methods. Local food systems help to regenerate rural landscapes through preservation of sustainable agro-ecological land-use patterns and revitalize urban settings through support of small, local retailers, gardens, and markets. These benefit themes run throughout research into the development of sustainable food systems (Dahlberg, 1994; DeLind, 1994; Halweil, 2002; Nichol, 2003; Pirog, 2003).

Support for the localisation of food systems for sustainability takes a variety of forms (DeLind, 2002; Hird, 2002). Activities supporting local food systems involve the establishment and involvement in community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, food co-ops or buying clubs, community gardening, direct farm marketing, food box schemes, allotment and household gardening, and support from local retailers and restaurants. Urban agriculture and the formation of local food policy councils has also grown dramatically in the past decade as a crucial form of support for sustainable, local food systems (Boron, 2003; Halweil, 2002; Hamilton, 2002; Smit, 1996a; Yeatman, 1994).

The growing call for decentralisation and a food system structured around local production carries important implications for urban and suburban areas. The implications relate especially to common, contemporary understandings of agricultural systems, urban systems, and their relationship to one another. More specifically, it challenges ideas as to what constitutes appropriate and necessary

urban activity, what, where, or how agricultural production functions, and how these activities relate to one another.

The idea of a virtually self-sufficient food producing system within a metropolitan area seems an oxymoron when considered in light of the common understanding and construction of urban, agricultural, and food systems (Smit, 1996b). The institutional framework of western culture thoroughly supports and perpetuates the conceptualisation of agriculture and food as exclusively or primarily rural activities and issues and works against the idea of food systems in the metropolitan area (Dahlberg, 2001).

In light of the obstacles faced and benefits associated with development of sustainable metropolitan food systems, many have called for policy development and planning schemes that recognise the existence of these systems and focus on their promotion and well-being (Hamilton, 2002; Pothukuchi, 1999; Smit, 2004; Smit, 1996b; Yeatman, 1994). Food-related policy and programme development commonly occurs through a fragmented approach in which various government departments and industry sectors create separate, potentially conflicting policy (Boron, 2003; Dahlberg, 1994; Pothukuchi, 1999). In the past three decades, growing recognition as to food system synergies and the relationships between food-related industries and activities materialised through the initiation of integrated, inter-departmental programme and policy development.

The concept of a council or committee within local government created for the purpose of addressing policy of a cross-sectoral nature specifically related to food has become increasingly recognised as an effective means of promoting localisation of food activities through cross-sectoral, local policy development. Local food policy groups achieve “more than just the local implementation of federal laws and requirements. Instead, state and local laws often attempt to address issues most significant to state and local” areas (Hamilton, 2002, p. 418). These groups, termed ‘food councils’ or ‘committees’, customarily recognize support for ‘local food’ as key or necessary to fostering healthy people, economies, and ecologies. Dahlberg (1994) and Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) suggest that, as food systems relate to numerous integrated areas of concern such as transport, health, and agriculture, effective policy and program development demanded for the cultivation of healthy food systems requires cross-sectoral communication and cooperation such as that provided by food policy councils. Within North America, several municipal governments have created, or offered official means of support and recognition for, food policy councils to address policy issues in this manner.

FOOD COUNCILS

Food councils are organisations created to comprehensively address sustainability issues in local food systems through cross-sectoral cooperation for program and policy development. These organisations often, although not exclusively, exist within and act as advisory committees to local, regional, or state governments. Food councils, acting as a body to bring together different sectors’ concerns, include members from relevant government sectors as well as farmers, consumers, restaurant owners, grocers, and other public interests. “The unique perspectives of all council members can yield creative solutions, ones that might not have happened but for their collaboration. The more diverse the group is, the more opportunities exist. A study of some of the first food policy councils revealed that those that focused narrowly on hunger did not succeed as well as those that took a broader food system approach”(Dahlberg, 1994, p. 170). In relation to structure, councils often exist as a sub sector of or advisory committee to local, regional, or state government. The financial, staff, and other forms of support perform an important role in continuation of the groups’ existence (Yeatman, 1994). Tasks or activities of food policy councils may include development and implementation of projects to address food system issues, provision of support to and

collaboration with other (private) organisations, advocacy, food systems assessments and annual reports, and policy recommendation or advisory service for government (Boron, 2003).

The first food policy councils emerged in North America in response to several events that triggered recognition by government representatives and businesses of the integrated nature of food system issues. In 1977, Robert Wilson and students from the University of Tennessee conducted a study that called attention to problems related to food security, agricultural land preservation, and other food system issues in Knoxville, Tennessee (Blakey, Wilson et al, 1977). Subsequently, the World Fair hosted in Knoxville in 1982 called the attention of government representatives and businesses to the “need for a co-ordinated approach to food transport, mass catering, waste disposal and the food access needs of inner city residents displaced by the Fair” (Yeatman, 1994, p. 23). Responding to these events, the first government supported food policy council was established in Knoxville in 1982 (Boron, 2003; Yeatman, 1994). In 1978 a non-profit food policy organisation, the Hartford Food System, was established in Hartford, Connecticut. However, it was not until 1991 that the city council created a formally recognised entity, the Food Policy Advisory Commission, including Hartford Food System representatives in the membership. Later, in 1998, Connecticut became the first state to establish a state food policy council with the purpose of addressing broader, regional food system issues (Boron, 2003).

Subsequent noteworthy events influenced the establishment of further food policy councils. The United States Conference of Mayors (1984-85), calling for municipal government participation in food policy projects, and the development of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and the related WHO Healthy Cities program, considerably influenced the creation of other state, regional, and municipal food policy councils in North America. Several of these councils, such as the Onondaga County, Charleston, Baltimore, and Austin food policy councils implemented several projects and operated for several years before disbanding. Several other food policy councils established in the late 1980s and 1990s continue to operate. Although definitions vary as to what exactly classifies a group as a food council, according to the definition used here, there are currently twenty five food councils in North America, including fourteen at municipal or urban levels, four at regional levels, and eight at state level.¹ For several years the State and Local Food Policy Councils initiative, run out of the Drake University Agricultural Law Center in Des Moines Iowa, has received funding among other sources from the United States Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency to establish new councils throughout the country. Outside of North America, the only known food policy committees have been created in a few locations in Australia. Hawkesbury and Penrith in New South Wales currently support food programs that focus on policy development, program design and implementation. Tasmania and Queensland also created government supported groups to establish cross-sectoral ‘food and nutrition policy’. However, these organisations remained ultimately ineffective and short-lived (Yeatman, 2003).

Bringing together a number of government departments, community and industry interests, food policy councils draw the crucial connections between all interests in the food system into the public policy making process. Through their comprehensive view and collaborative nature, the work of the council results in food solutions that speak to interests across the food system and urban area. While the majority of councils are still currently in their beginning or formative stages, having only been established within the past five years, the work of food policy councils has contributed significantly to our knowledge and understanding of food system issues. They present unique successful strategies for improving local agriculture, the local economy of the food industry, nutrition and health, and food insecurity, winning the support of government and funding bodies at local, regional, state, and national levels.

¹ The Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council, as it responds to both municipal and county needs, is considered here as both a ‘local’ and a ‘regional’ council.

Food Council Activities

Food councils create and maintain several types of programs and policy initiatives that engage with the advantages of cross-sectoral collaboration and local, regional, or state level government support. Integrating activities of government agencies, public sector, and private sector organisations, councils can close gaps in food supply chains, which improves incomes areas and marketing capabilities for small and medium size farmers and farming communities near urban areas while simultaneously supporting improved nutrition, food systems education, and sustainability within cities.

Programs and policy change facilitated by food councils take many different forms. Programs or policy initiatives can generally be grouped into three main focal areas: regional food systems education; local food purchasing; and food production extension. Local food purchasing activities aim to increase the purchase of locally grown food, supporting small to medium size farms within a region while increasing consumption of fresher, healthier food for residents of a particular area. Activities related to regional food systems education embrace the main, underlying goal of almost all food councils' work: introducing food systems concepts for integration as a subtext to daily activities and institutionalisation within the framework and conceptualisation of organisations' and governments' customary mode of operation. Food production extension programmes focus on facilitation, providing tools, knowledge, and resources, to support local small and medium size producers. Collectively, these activities strengthen regional food systems, adding a crucial component to support the viability and sustainability of urban areas.

Local Food Purchasing

Although local food purchasing promotion takes several different forms, there remain a few programs that have gained more widespread attention and implementation among food councils. Promoting and altering purchasing activities to support regional food system sustainability includes a variety of stakeholders, from producer to consumer, and potential markets, calling for both policy and programme work. A central aspect of local food purchasing is identification, creation, or support for new or existing venues for direct farm marketing. Direct farm marketing most easily evidently occurs at farmers' markets and farm-gates, while institutional purchasing activities remain more hidden and often require the creation of additional marketing levels such as farmers' cooperatives to coordinate collection and distribution for sizeable orders and demand. Promotion of direct farm marketing boosts farmers' share of retail food dollars while increasing access to and supply of fresher, healthier food. To increase awareness and patronage of farmers' markets and farm-gates, as well as stores that stock or restaurants that include as ingredients locally produced food several food councils have engaged in 'Buy Local' campaigns.

'Buy local' campaigns continue to increase as a primary aspect of support for local producers. These campaigns can most readily be seen in the form of local foods labelling, 'buy local' guides, or farm maps and integrate support for direct farm marketing. Local foods labelling has already become a fairly widespread phenomenon, with government departments, especially of agriculture, independently, and without the aid of food councils, researching, creating, and implementing labelling programs based on the success of previous work of other, outside agencies. However, pilot projects such as the 'Buy Ontario' campaign created by the Toronto Food Policy Councils helped to launch the popularity of this strategy for local food promotion. Expanding upon the concept of helping consumers to identify outlets for local food purchasing, 'Buy local' guides are becoming among the most popular and widely used form of local food purchasing promotion. Providing consumers with educational material, farm listings, directories of food stores carrying local produce, and other information related to local food purchasing such as crop or harvest calendars, food councils in Portland, Michigan, Iowa, and Kansas among others, have produced guides to educate the public on the benefits and availability to buy locally produced and processed foods.

Farm maps have developed as another increasingly popular method for promoting local food purchasing activities. These initiatives aim to create a compendium of opportunities to purchase locally grown food within a particular region directly from farmers through farm-stands or farm-gate sales and pick-your-own operations as well as farmers' markets, community supported agriculture farms, and other outlets such as local processing facilities. Information on the location of these operations is then assembled into a map, offering users the opportunity to take a local food and farm tour of the region or simply to find local sources for direct farm purchasing. Examples of farm trails created through the support of food councils exist in the work of the Connecticut Food Policy Council, Ottawa Food Security Council, and Hawkesbury Food Program.

The Connecticut Food Policy Council drew on collaboration between the Department of Transportation and Department of Agriculture, within which department the council is housed. The map can provide for an "entertaining and educational road trip" and includes farm facts, photos, a crop calendar, a history of agriculture in the state, agricultural statistics, information on Cooperative Extension Services and the Food Policy Council, as well as Department of Agriculture contact information (Connecticut Department of Agriculture, 2003; Connecticut Food Policy Council, 2005). The map includes over 237 direct farm purchasing operations as well as a listing of the 62 state-wide farmers' markets. The maps are distributed at agricultural extension offices, tourism centres, farm stands, or by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Department of Agriculture.

Ottawa Food Security Council, in partnership with Ottawa Economic Development and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, developed a map similar to that of the Connecticut Food Policy Council. The publication consists of a map highlighting 39 farms, farmers' markets, and other outlets offering direct farm purchase in the Ottawa valley region. It also includes a crop calendar or "harvest chart", educational information on the benefits of buying locally, and information on the food security council. The map, known as the Buy Local Guide/Le Guide d'Achat Local, can be obtained at Ottawa Public Libraries, Community Health Centers, City of Ottawa information kiosks, several businesses throughout the downtown and outlying areas, as well as through an interactive online guide at the Food Security Council website.

In Australia, the Hawkesbury Food Program, based in the Hawkesbury region outside of Sydney, created a farm map called the Harvest Trail in collaboration with New South Wales Departments of Agriculture and Tourism. The Hawkesbury Trail project was so well received in the region that the subcommittee of the Food Program broke off to form a separate enterprise known as the Hawkesbury Harvest. Recognising the success and value of such a program as the Hawkesbury Harvest, the Western Australian Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the Peel Development Commission embarked on the creation of a similar program for the Peel region outside of Perth known as the Harvest Highway. In association with the recently developed Peel Regional Food Policy Council, the Peel Harvest Highway is being developed to include an array of farms, restaurants, and tourism operations.

While local foods marketing activities directed at the public such as farmers' markets and 'buy local campaigns perform an important role in supporting local food purchasing, private or public organisations and institutions hold a significant portion of the food dollar and purchasing power. Changing institutional purchasing activities then remains a crucial component of supporting local farmers and a viable regional food system. Several food councils have initiated institutional food purchasing programs and purchasing policy changes so that public or private institutions can and are required to purchase locally grown food. Similar to the intended outcomes of other local food purchasing programs, these policy and programme initiatives increase farmers' share of the food dollar while providing employees, visitors, residents, or patrons of these institutions with fresher, healthier food. Although somewhat difficult to implement due to the volume and quantities

demanding for institutional food orders and the associated need for greater coordination in the distribution of locally produced food, some successful examples exist such as that of the Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council's program supporting purchase of local food by county correctional facilities.

Education

Several food councils and food council experts view education for the institutionalisation of food systems thinking as the primary objective of their work. Although commonly occurring through casual interaction with individuals, organisations, institutions, and among council members in everyday and routine work and communications, many councils also engage the use of more formally organised educational programmes and policy development. One of the most straightforward manifestations of educational activities is the publication of brochures and other informational materials. These materials can be published independently of other work and include information on various aspects of the regional food system from production to purchasing and waste or information on the work of the food council itself. Educational material is also frequently included in documents created by councils to address other program areas such as that included in local food guides and research reports. On another level, primary and secondary schools have become a focus of particular interest of food council work, through facilitating the development of food systems educational curricula for classrooms and school gardens as well as promoting consumption of more fresh, nutritious food in school meals. Improving school nutrition through the creation of lunch, breakfast, and summer service programs also remains a crucial aspect of the work of several councils. While relating to institutional purchasing policies, although not specifically for local food purchasing, school food programs created by councils can take advantage of the opportunity to integrate classroom education with other daily activities.

Hartford Food Policy Advisory Commission was one of the first councils to initiate a program relating to school food delivery services. In 1993 the Commission began monitoring participation rates and the quality of food in the city's summer food service program. Since this time, the Commission has been able to advocate for use of a local vending contractor and increase quality and participation in the program. Toronto Food Policy Council has also been involved in several aspects of school nutrition and education, enabling the creation of the Food Access Grants Program to direct \$2.4 million in funding to school food programs as well as facilitating expansion of school food nutrition programs from 53 to 350 participating schools. As an increasingly popular form of school food nutrition and education programs, Portland-Multnomah, Oklahoma, and San Francisco food councils have initiated farm to school programs, allowing for the creation of direct linkages between local producers and schools that support local farmers while simultaneously providing fresher, more nutritious food to school children.

In creating farm to school programs, food councils utilise their relationships with farmers, food processors, distributors, education professionals, nutrition experts, and various government agencies to enable a supply chain and coordination of activities aimed at raising awareness of food system activities connecting curriculum to school meals and gardening activities. In developing these programs for different schools and regional contexts, councils also utilise research capabilities to determine appropriate methods of delivery.

Food Production Extension

Food production extension relates to the provision of resources, tools, and knowledge to food producers, usually of small or medium size enterprises. In relation to urban areas, food production extension relates to urban and peri-urban farmers as well as those within a wider 'foodshed' region to create capacity for a stable local food supply. Food council activity in relation to support for urban agriculture and urban farmers include the Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council's inventory of land for urban and peri-urban farming, the Vancouver Food Policy Council's work

with municipal policy related to bee-keeping, and the work of several food councils in supporting community gardening, community kitchens, and urban food products processing facilities. In the sphere of urban agricultural activity, the Toronto council, among a variety of other related activities, facilitated development of nutrient recovery from urban households' food wastes to provide inputs for community gardens and close unsustainable open-ended resource loops. Extension services also broaden to include creation of farmers' and food processors' cooperatives, directories of educational and other resources for farmers, and conferences or other modes of education to improve production and support new farmers.

Discussion

The programmes and objectives of food councils described above, such as local food guides, school food service programs, and local food labelling are not exclusive to the work of food councils. Similar programmes are also created under the auspices of non-profit organisations and independent government agencies, sometimes with advantage of occasional collaborative work. In contrast to the work of these organisations, campaigns of food councils maintain a few key advantages. The first advantage is that of a "food systems perspective". This allows the structure and implementation framework for projects to avoid the pitfalls and gaps encountered in approaches based on a fragmented perspective of food system activities. Another advantage of the food council approach relates to the expertise, support, funding, collaboration, and promotion gained through inclusion and integration of a variety of government departments and non-governmental organisations. This alliance of knowledge, tools, resources, and collaborative relationships provides insight into avenues for structure and promotion not readily identified in other minimally or non-collaborative efforts. Local food guides and farm maps may benefit from the mutual inclusion of resources from Agriculture as well Tourism, Transportation, Planning and Infrastructure, agencies where connections would not normally be seen or utilised. School food and farm programs may benefit from relationships with farmers' cooperatives, urban gardeners, and departments of Health and Transportation in logistical planning and curriculum development. Food council models also take the advantage of input from a wide variety of public and private stakeholders. This allows for a more informed perspective of the potential reception of programme initiatives by the wider community as well as increased understanding of and consideration for the attitudes, judgements, and needs of broad cross-sectors of the population in question.

The conventional fragmented approach to food policy and programming is widespread, including significant presence and affect in major urban centres of Australia. Associated with this remains the obscured assumption and belief in the urban/rural and urban/agriculture dichotomy. As is common to most cities, urban areas in Australia rest upon and are encompassed by a wealth of valuable, fertile agricultural land upon which a significant amount of agricultural production, crucial to the cities' food supply, takes place. Research suggests that almost 25% of Australia's total gross value agricultural production occurs within the urban catchment areas of the five mainland states (Houston, 2004a). This value of this production makes significant contribution to urban food supply and will continue to increase in importance as rising prices of fossil fuels and potential climate change impacts threaten the populations' food security. While this urban and peri-urban agricultural production amounts to a significant and invaluable portion of the food supply for the respective urban areas, contemporary planning processes for Australian cities operate without significant regard for the value, importance, and needs of current and potential agricultural production in peri-urban or urban fringe areas, the particular areas of a city's foodshed necessary for the maintenance of a stable, local supply of food to the urban populace (Houston, 2004b, 2004a; Mason, 2005). Urban planning processes also fail to recognize the relationship of this agricultural production to various non-specifically agricultural sectors, missing out on potentially valuable collaborative partnerships with education, health, housing, tourism, and transport divisions. A few initiatives taking after the food council model have emerged in Australia, including the Penrith Food Project and Hawkesbury Food Program, whose programme initiatives, such as the Model

Food Services Policy and Hawkesbury Harvest, have demonstrated significant success. The success of these initiatives and those in North America illustrate the potential value and implications of the food council model potential for governance and planning in Australian cities.

CONCLUSION

Current obstacles faced in the function of and planning for urban food systems in Australia hold significant implications when considering goals for food security and sustainable development. Outcomes of collaborative planning and programming through initiatives such as those focussing on local food purchasing, food systems education, and production extension services demonstrate the potential value of food council models for pursuing more comprehensive, inclusive planning for urban food security and sustainability in Australia. Farm map programs have created jobs and boosted income for small farmers and businesses, linked urban residents with local producers, and placed dwindling rural communities on the map as key tourist destinations. Resulting from the success of collaboration between various government departments as well as private sector tourism, agriculture and community associations creation and promotion of food guide, school food, an producer extension services and programs demonstrates a valuable outlet for utilising the networking and collaborative resources of cross-sectoral food councils. These initiatives, facilitating connections between the health, education, and agricultural sectors make use of these resources in a similar fashion. Farm-to-school programs, connect schools with local agriculture, offering multiple benefits including more appealing, fresher, healthier cafeteria meals, hands-on nutrition and natural sciences education, support for the local farm economy, increased community appreciation for the value of local agriculture, farmland preservation, and environmental conservation. Through these initiatives, food councils have demonstrated an ability to mediate the problems associated with the fragmentation of food policy within traditional policy making frameworks, generating comprehensive, allied solutions to food issues within and surrounding urban areas. This systems approach is facilitating the development of coordinated policy and programs to provide a unique and successful alternative to traditional, fragmented policy management while encouraging support for more sustainable urban food systems.

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