

The Toolkit is made up of seven modules that can be grouped into two stages of food system planning, assessment, and evaluation. The first set of modules (1-4) guides the preliminary stages of an impact assessment and includes framing the system, relevant economic activities and assessment process as well as collecting and analyzing relevant primary and secondary data. For those seeking a more robust economic impact assessment, the second set of modules (5-7) provides a more technical set of practices and discussion of how to use the information collected in stage one to conduct a more rigorous analysis.

Economic development officials, local policymakers, and community planners are increasingly interested in examining the many benefits offered by local and regional food systems. These benefits may result from shifts in economic development principles and practices, augmented by changes in consumer and investor behavior.

We suggest users review the whole Toolkit and then move among modules to align with the stage of discussions in their community, or address the specificity of economic measures required for the decisions to be considered. Users will benefit from reviewing different modules throughout planning discussions as new circumstances arise, as new expertise is brought into the assessment process, or as clarification of the shared vision of the community process is needed.

Goals of the Toolkit

- Provide guidance for communities to measure and assess the economic impacts of local food investments;
- Share best practices, community case studies and applied research;
- Support rigorous assessments of food system activities so that policymakers, community leaders and businesses can decide whether to invest in initiatives that increase local food activity;
- Develop a roadmap for those receiving federal USDA AMS grants and other resources to evaluate potential contributions and/or impacts.

Project Team

Dawn Thilmany (coordinator)

Allie Bauman, Rebecca Hill, and Becca Jablonski, Colorado State University

Todd Schmit, Cornell University

Ken Meter & Megan Phillips Goldenberg, Crossroads Resource Center

David Hughes, University of Tennessee

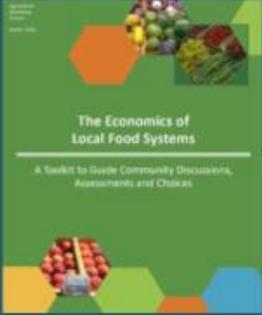
Steve Deller and Alfonso Morales, University of Wisconsin

David Swenson, Iowa State University

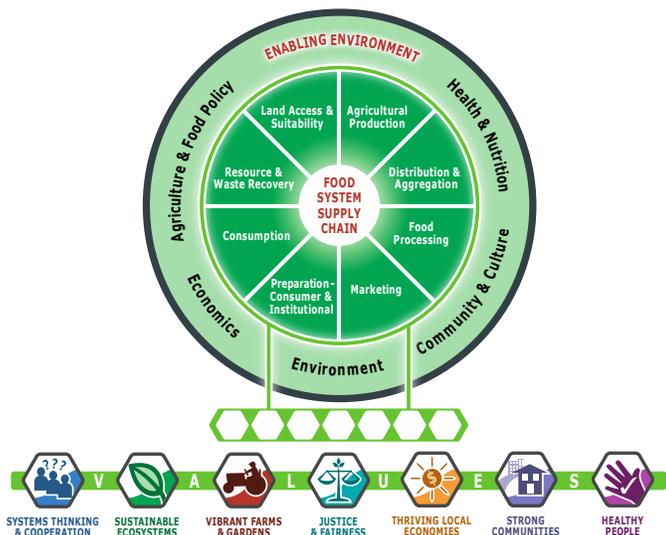
Jeffrey O'Hara, Debra Tropp, Carlos Coleman & Samantha Schaffstall, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

David Conner, University of Vermont

<https://localfoodeconomics.com/>



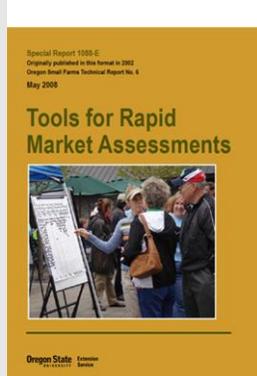
Highlights: Best Practices, Case Studies, How to Tell a Story with your Data



A Good Assessment Starts with a Good Plan

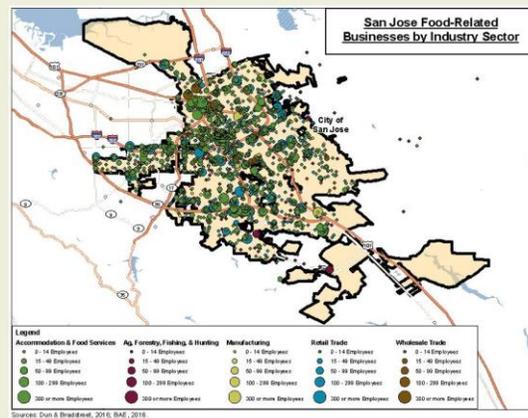
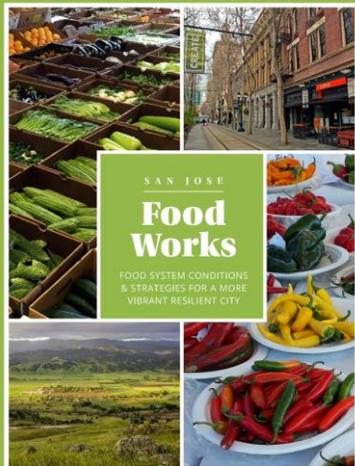
- Scoping the project is a key first step, so several characterizations of the food system created in projects are offered as examples
- Planning and assessment team’s skills, expertise, resources and networks should reflect the scope of the system and assessment
- Effective examples of graphics to reflect key elements of the food system and assessment are shared to guide communities and discussions

- Creative Primary Data Approaches:
- Dot Poster Surveys, **Rapid Market Assessments**
 - Developed by researchers at Oregon State University to gather information from farmers’ market patrons.
 - Many advantages:
 - Simple to administer, responses are easily tallied, and possible to get a large set of responses in a short period of time.
 - Respondents report that this method is faster to complete, more fun, and less intrusive than written surveys or face-to-face interviews.



Use of Secondary Data

- QCEW Data for trends in employment, wages and establishments and comparisons with other cities
- Dun & Bradstreet data for snapshot of establishments, revenues, and employees by industry sector (production, wholesale, manufacturing, retail, food service)
- Maps for locations of establishments by industry sector and scale across the city
- City General Plan, strategic plans and policies for references to food and ag activities
- County and regional policy documents for references to food and ag activities



- New case studies, data sources, community-based examples and training materials available on the website: <https://localfoodeconomics.com/>
- Sign up for the e-list under the Connect menu to be alerted about updates and to become part of the growing Community of Practice focused on the Economics of Local Foods