

FARM PROMOTION AND SUPPORT

Ideas and Tools for Economic Development and Tourism Development Authorities



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Produced by Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
Funding Support from Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
Contributors: Peter Marks, Charlie Jackson, Emily Jackson, Rose McLarney
Research assistance: Sarah Olliges
ASAP • 729 Haywood Rd. • Asheville, NC 28806
828-236-1282
www.AppalachianGrown.org

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INTRODUCTION

Today, more than any time in the past 50 years, is an opportune time for developing the relationship between farms and communities. We believe that farms are at the starting point of reversing a downward slide, and are poised to become a growth industry in your community. Farms can create jobs in your community. Farms can increase tax revenue for your community. Farms can attract visitors to your community. Farms can redirect some of the \$370 million spent by tourists on food and drink in our region (and \$2.2 billion spent by residents) into your local economy. Farms can help your community stand out as a place to live, visit, retire, and work.

Who are Farm Support Leaders?

The primary audiences for *Farm Promotion and Support* are **tourism authorities** and **economic development authorities**. If you hold one of these positions, you might ask: Why me?

1. You have a unique reach: Just about every county in our region, no matter how rural, staffs these two offices, even if they are one-person offices.
2. We believe you have the most to offer, and the most to gain, from an expanded relationship with farms.
3. Such effective examples of farm support and promotion strategies for you exist around the country. Promotion strategies may be underutilized, but they're ready to be deployed in our region. We're excited to share these strategies with you in *Farm Promotion and Support*.

This publication may be useful for other audiences too, including:

- **elected officials** such as Town Councilors and Aldermen;
- **destination managers**;
- urban and rural **planners**;
- **farmers**, who can learn how to better connect with local leaders;
- and **community members** who wish to advocate for best practices where they live.

Farms in Western North Carolina

Western North Carolina is home to almost 12,000 family farms. Farms occupy more than a third of the privately owned land in the region. This open land provides wildlife habitat and makes it possible for residents and travelers to enjoy the beautiful scenery for which our region is famous.

Of course, these thousands of farms are also home to people, who for generations have relied upon the income the farm generates for some or all of their livelihood. Collectively these farms generate more than \$500 million in sales. These sales support farm jobs. The phrase "farm jobs" is not heard much, and when it is used, typically describes any labor force the farm may employ as opposed to the entrepreneurs who own and run the farm.

We should talk about farm jobs more often. 1,700 Western North Carolina residents lost their tobacco-growing income between 2002 and 2007, but a manufacturing plant closing is addressed as a jobs issue, while farm loss isn't.

We are thankful for the support of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA), the primary funder for this publication. To learn more about National Heritage Areas, the definition and goals of the heritage area we live in, and other BRNHA partners and programs that may benefit your work supporting farms, see www.blueridgeheritage.com.



Farms also play a key role in protecting something else of incredible value: our food culture and heritage. Many people eat locally grown food simply because it is fresher and tastes better. Others buy the traditional foods they grew up eating. What's more, our distinctive eateries, festivals, and historic sites are made more distinctive by the people still actively producing stone-ground white cornmeal, greasy beans, sorghum syrup, Keiffer pears, country ham, and (even) liver mush, or whatever foods are traditional in your region.

THE NEW FARM ECONOMY: KEY TRENDS AND CONCEPTS

Throughout the 20th century, North Carolina farms worked to “modernize,” transitioning from subsistence farming (farming for neighbors and communities), to growing commercial crops for the increasingly global food supply. These products would enter the distribution chain as an undifferentiated commodity such as an anonymous tomato that could have just as easily been from Florida, New Jersey, Mexico, or California. This tomato would fetch the going price as determined by supply and demand; there was no way to get any other price.

Due to the small average farm size, limited infrastructure, and more difficult growing conditions, it was, and still is, hard to thrive as an Appalachian farmer growing for global markets. Farm products can be grown more easily and more cheaply somewhere else. The globalization of agriculture, at least around here, has hurt family farms.

And so it went: in the second half of the 20th century, we lost most of our farms, just as we lost most of our mom-and-pop shops and manufacturing businesses. The farms that survive and continue to grow products for export from our region are typically those who have diversified—growing several products, or selling through several market channels. In other parts of North Carolina, some farm industries built for global distribution still work well today. NC sweet potato growers are just one of several examples. But here in the mountains, commercial-scale farming, while still existent and important, is a shadow of what it once was. The 2004 tobacco buyout (eliminating a quota system that kept prices high) was the final straw, and by 2007 we had lost more than three-quarters of the tobacco growing income our region enjoyed just five years earlier.



Three generations of Darnells in the sweet onion field.

Darnell Farms, Whittier.

What's new in farming? One might think not much: the average age of farmers in our region (according to the 2007 Ag Census) is about 56. Believe it or not, this figure represents a decrease in age from the previous farmer count. The decrease is in part due to older farmers without farming heirs bowing out of farming. But it may also be due to an influx of new farmers and a transfer of farm proprietorship

to a new generation.

Regardless of age, this much is clear: farms are innovating at a record pace. Farms are finding new models that are working, allowing them to stay in business and thrive. Here are a few of those models.

Diversifying the Farm

Perhaps the most widespread trend is diversification. When farms use this word, it refers to product diversification (growing a mix of crops) and/or market diversification (reaching out to a mix of buyers). Henderson County farmer and ASAP board member Danny McConnell says it best: “20 years ago our farm grew one product (apples) and had one customer (Gerber). Last year, more than 3,000 people bought our farm products, we sold to multiple wholesale buyers, we grew more than 25 produce items, and we made some of our produce into jam and ice cream. These days, farms that don’t adapt, don’t survive.”



A diverse selection of produce.
Ten Mile Farm at Asheville City Market.

Sales Direct to the Consumer

Across the state, direct sales of farm products to the consumer increased 69% from 2002 to 2007, and now total more than 29 million dollars, 1.4 million of that in Buncombe County alone. This number is still a drastic undercount, as direct sales are the hardest type of farm commerce to track. Direct sales include:

- Farmers market sales;
- Roadside farm stands and farm stores; u-pick sales;
- CSAs (farm share/farm subscription programs);
- Farm tourism and community or school outreach to spur on-farm sales.

Sales to Grocers, Restaurants, and Foodservice

Retailers such as grocers and restaurants, which are typically supplied by wholesale distributors, are showing increased interest in purchasing directly from farms. Buyers interested in local food range from restaurants and natural foods stores, to regional chain grocers such as Ingles and Earth Fare, to national chain grocers such as Whole Foods and Wal-Mart, to our school systems, preschools, colleges, and hospitals. ASAP’s *Local Food Guide* lists more than 75 restaurants, grocers, and institutions in Western North Carolina that are actively seeking locally grown products. ASAP’s *Mixing Bowl: Farm to Business Trade Directory* lists 172 farms with an active interest in selling wholesale to retailers.

Alternative Production Methods

Given increased concern about food-borne illness, synthetic chemicals in food, and the health qualities of food produced on the largest scale, many farms are using their alternative production methods as a marketing advantage. Organic certification, now overseen by the USDA, is one approach. Certified Organic acreage is on the increase and now totals, for example, 189 acres in Ashe County, 176

acres in Madison County, and 446 acres in Buncombe County. These Ag Census figures are likely undercounts. But Certified Organic is not by any means the only alternative production claim around. Consumers are also increasingly interested in meats that are pastured, given no synthetic growth hormones, or “Animal Welfare Approved.” For produce, “Certified Naturally Grown” is an alternative production standard gaining popularity. Many farmers selling to direct markets maintain no formal certifications, but rely on communicating personally with the customer about the production methods.

Local Labeling

Perhaps the foremost labeling claim is “locally grown.” Studies show it is this claim which adds the most consumer value to a farm product, because consumers know that local farmers grow food that can be fresher, more distinctive to their region, better tasting, and better worth your food dollars. ASAP’s Appalachian Grown program gives farmers and retailers a branding tool that clearly identifies their products as locally grown on a family farm.

Adding Value

Many farmers now wear multiple hats, extending their role beyond just that of “grower.” Farmers are still growers, but they are also salespeople, marketers, food product entrepreneurs, distributors, destination managers, and educators. Taking on any of these roles differentiates farm goods and adds value to their base price. Farmers who add value are entrepreneurs in the purest sense: ambitious leaders who combine land, capital, and skills to create better goods and services, and earn more profits.

Case Study: Appalachian Grown

The Appalachian Grown brand, a project of ASAP, identifies products from family farms in the Southern Appalachians. The Appalachian Grown symbol may be displayed with goods from farms that have completed our simple, free certification process.



When people see the Appalachian Grown logo in restaurants or stores, they know they are buying fresher foods that support family farms, strengthen the local economy, preserve rural culture, and protect the natural beauty of the Appalachian mountains. Appalachian Grown increases

public awareness of where food comes from and makes it easy to select local products by providing a consistent, recognizable logo for use on local products from a variety of sources.

Appalachian Grown producers and sellers can get Appalachian Grown labels, signage, and promotional materials, and are eligible for matching funds for marketing. Guidelines for certification, a map of the counties included, and other information about Appalachian Grown are on ASAP’s website (www.asapconnections.org).

HOW PROMOTING FARMS CAN SUPPORT YOUR BOTTOM LINE TOURISM GOALS

Consider these writings condensed from Roger Brooks, *The New Age of Tourism* (2009). How might this advice apply to farms as tourism partners?

“Experiences are far more important than geography. The activity comes first, location is second. This is the age of experiences . . . The baby boom generation accounts for 80% of all travel spending . . . they control 70% of North America’s wealth. Boomers will inherit \$10.4 trillion and are spending the money on second homes and travel.”

“Boomers’ favorite experiences include culinary tourism, artists in action, ethnic events, home and garden, open air markets. Add education to the mix. Trend: Downshifting and simplicity. Peak months for travel: April, May, September, October.”

Of those in your community, farmers are among the best-positioned to provide a taste of local culture, heritage, and history – exactly the authentic experiences that today’s travelers are seeking.

- Farm visits can include picking fruit, learning or observing a rare rural skill, interacting with animals, and even staying overnight on the farm to observe or engage in farm life. ASAP’s *Local Food Guide* lists more than 200 Western North Carolina farms that welcome visitors, including 20 that offer lodging. More than 50 farms offer u-pick. More than 100 offer educational tours of some kind. Schools can contact ASAP to receive a copy of *The Hayride*, our publication listing and describing farms that offer school field trip experiences.
- Eating at a restaurant that lists locally grown ingredients and may show pictures of farmers on the wall or on the menu, transforms the experience from “just another good restaurant meal” to an experience tied to a specific place, time, culture, and history: your region’s.
- Farmers markets are the ultimate open-air shopping, one of the features Roger Brooks lists in his top five activities embraced by today’s travelers. Because farmers markets offer unique vendors who preserve and promote the foods, crafts, and traditions of our region, they are the perfect counter to cookie-cutter shopping and attractions.

Here in the Blue Ridge, note that farms offer what many come here seeking: views. Much of our public land is hemmed in by tall trees, and overlooks

Case Study: Wilkes County, NC

www.wilkescountytourism.com

Notable features:

- Web page includes farm images, as does virtual tour. Brief welcome text includes the phrase “While you are here, you can crunch a tart Pink Lady apple from a local orchard as you walk the Yadkin River Greenway . . .”
- Agritourism is one of six categories with a directory linked from the attractions web page. Listings are robust and kept up to date.
- Tourism staff have implemented social media program. Twitter and Facebook posts feature local wineries and other farm products, such as a hard cider made from locally-grown apples.
- Printable sample itineraries. (Two-day and four-day trips include farm and vineyard destinations and specifically mention local purchasing by restaurants.)

can feel crowded and inauthentic. But many of our mountain farms abut National Forest land and Parkway land and feature open land with stunning views. Farms offer beautiful scenery, great photo opportunities, and authentic experiences.

FIVE FARM TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BEST PRACTICES

1. Integrate Farms into Existing Promotions and Displays

The key task of any tourism office is to attract visitors by promoting the features and experiences of a place. Our first tip is a simple one: include farms, farmers markets, and Farm to Table restaurants in your existing promotions. Integrating farms can be simple, and take place gradually as materials are re-printed, displays changed, and websites rebuilt. Try these strategies:

- Visit farms and markets. Work to develop a library of photographs and information about your local agriculture features. Partner with groups such as Farm Bureau, FFA, Cooperative Extension, grower associations, 4-H, and others to help complete this task.
- Include farm, market, and farmer images in your rack card, relocation materials, website, e-newsletter, and other promotional pieces.
- Reorganize a corner of your visitor center to focus on farms. Work with the partners listed above to keep this area fresh and attractive as the seasons change and new partnerships emerge.
- Must a business belong to the Chamber in order to be featured in your visitor center? If so, work with Chamber personnel to support farmer outreach as needed.

Other Notable Examples

- *List a seasonal calendar for farm products, like Salem County, NJ.*
www.salemcountyagritourism.com/what'sinseason/
- *Following the example of Dutchess County, NY, create a recipe page that features recipes provided by local farms, using locally grown ingredients:*
www.dutchesstourism.com/agri-recipes.asp
- *Many people search the internet for recipes, so including them on your site will bring much unexpected traffic. Recipes can also be inspiring to those who seek out your site directly.*
- *Like www.visitnc.com, commission and post feature stories about farm destinations:*
www.visitnc.com/journeys/articles/stop-by-the-farm/1/have-some-fun-at-a-farm
www.visitnc.com/journeys/articles/stop-by-the-farm/2/stay-on-a-farm-in-nc
- *Show farm and local food images in your printed visitor guide, as does the Asheville CVB: www.ashevillevisitorguide.com/*
- *Create a simple farmers tailgate market directory, and work with ASAP to keep it updated. Henderson County does this well:*
www.historichendersonville.org/tailgate.htm

2. Get Known as a Farm to Table Destination

Whether rural or urban or both, the area you are charged with promoting may be home to great Farm to Table restaurants. When diners learn that food on their plates comes from a nearby place—a farm and a farmer with a name and a face—it gives the meal and the visit more meaning. Such an experience makes the visitor feel a connection to your destination. However, some rural counties have few independent restaurants; others may lack the type of farm suited for sales to restaurants, or the independent food distributors who might deliver locally-grown products.

So start by looking around and asking around. Is local purchasing information clearly presented on restaurant menus? If not, is local purchasing happening at all? Talk with restaurant proprietors, farmers, and any independent food distributors based near you. To turn scattered Farm to Table practices into a promotable phenomenon, you may need to take a few steps:

- Encourage chefs to put farm and farmer names on their menus.
- Encourage restaurant owners to learn about the farms featured and train waitstaff to be able to share basic facts and stories.
- Establish communication between restaurant and visitor center personnel so that you know what's in season, where. A visitor who inquires about apple orchards may also wish to know about restaurants that serve desserts made with local apples. This visitor may then be more likely to dine at an independent restaurant, perhaps in your historic downtown.

Case Study: Asheville/Buncombe County, NC

Website: www.exploreasheville.com / foodtopiansociety.com. Developed by the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority. Notable features:

- Web page includes farm images, “ask a farmer” features, farmers market directories, feature articles on farms, markets, and restaurants. Here’s the text from the farm to table landing page:
“Farm to Table Dining
[Asheville’s top chefs](#) have traveled the world to learn their craft, but they all know a secret— the best ingredients are found right here at home. Many of the city’s best restaurants have paired with local farmers to bring the freshest fruits and vegetables directly from the farm to the table.
Top chefs visit [local tailgate markets](#) and farms several times each week to make sure their customers are served fresh mountain-grown produce. [Local farmers](#) are also raising free-range, hormone-free beef, pork and lamb and bringing back

heirloom fruits and vegetables. There’s nothing like biting into a tomato bred for flavor instead of one engineered to survive a cross-country trip.”

- Web page includes “chef’s favorite recipes” and photo and video content.
- The CVB has created a newsletter specifically for those subscribers interested in culinary news, events, and special deals – a great way for tourism authorities to cross-promote with restaurants and get tourists coming back for repeat visits (especially those who live within a half-day drive – a growing travel demographic).
- Unique printed materials, designed to be a “passport to Foodtopia” were created by the Asheville CVB and distributed in nearby cities, with support through print ad placements. The campaign encourages the reader to “Visit a city where food is the centerpiece of daily life with 17 [farmers markets](#), 135 independent [restaurants](#) and a bevy of [local breweries](#).” This message connects the interest in farms with culinary tourism.

- Include farm to table restaurants in any farm-themed displays, brochures, special events, and websites. See http://visitmt.com/experiences/food_and_beverage/ for one example. Eating out can be a simple a way to connect with local agriculture, without requiring as much time or energy as visiting the farm.

3. Create Farm Maps, Farm Trails, and Themed Itineraries

ASAP’s early consumer research determined interest in buying locally-grown food was strong. However, the main barrier respondents faced was a lack of knowledge about where local food could be found. Tourists in particular may feel wary of rural areas and unsure which potential destinations offer real hospitality and real local farm products. For these reasons, providing accurate resources offering guidance, direction, and information is among the most needed and helpful of all farm support efforts.

The first step in creating farm maps and other resources is to identify the most appealing and appropriate farms, markets, and retail local food outlets. ASAP’s Local Food Guide database is a starting point, and we are happy to share our data with you. Additionally, reach out to your Cooperative Extension office, Farm Services Agency office, Farm Bureau, and local producer groups to identify destinations to include. Cast a wide net. Chamber of Commerce outreach will help identify farm-linked restaurants, B&B’s, and destinations.

Farm maps can either be printed or displayed online. ASAP has recently supported printed farm map projects in Haywood and Henderson counties. In both cases, the format chosen was an 11x17 inch sheet, folded in half and then in a trifold, which results in a brochure size perfect for visitor center racks or for mailing. This standard paper size tends to be affordable to print. Dutchess County, New York, uses a slightly different size page and fewer photos, but provides a large traditional “dot chart” to indicate amenities of each farm: <http://www.dutchesstourism.com/PDF/farmfreshmap2007.pdf> .

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture produced a statewide agritourism map in 2009. Contact Martha Glass at the NCDA Agritourism office (www.ncagr.gov/markets/agritourism/) to inquire about future statewide farm map plans.

Interactive online mapping has become more affordable to develop with the advent of Google Maps and similar technology. See the interactive winery map at www.loudounfarms.org/. For a more local example, see the map created by the Blue Ridge Farm Direct Market Association in Henderson County, at www.ncapples.com (click on any farm name).

Farm trails are simply a way to organize farms by route, location, or theme. The [fruit trail](#) in Fresno County, CA was organized by the growers themselves, and is promoted as a destination by local tourism authorities. [Sandy](#)



A panel from a single county, producer group farm directory.

[Area Farm Loop](#), organized about half an hour from Portland, Oregon, was funded by Clackamas County Tourism Development. The Loop features seventeen farms in a convenient circular route. Quilt Trails, a program found locally in Yancey and Mitchell Counties, features large quilt squares. Paintings of quilt patterns are placed on the sides of barns and then marked on a map. The Quilt Trail fulfills travelers' desire to get out and see the real countryside. Tapping into this interest brings tourist dollars off the main roads and into our small towns and small businesses. Authentic-feeling attractions such as farm trails also make your visitors' stay more memorable and makes them more likely to return.

One challenge in any information resource is the need to keep it up to date. The traveling public becomes frustrated attempting to follow an outdated trail map; old information can do more harm than good. If you can, commit resources to update a document at the time you first create it. If you can't afford to keep the information fresh, be sure to take it off the web and remove it from print material outlets once its accuracy weakens.

Themed itineraries suggest day trips for your visitors that may include farms, wineries, Farm to Table restaurants, and other relevant destinations. It can be advantageous to partner with private tour businesses. The opportunity to appear on an itinerary can be an incentive for businesses to support local farms.

Case Study: Farm Map, Haywood County NC

For the 2009 season, the Buy Haywood project, led by George Ivey, worked with ASAP to create a printed map directory to more than 30 locations to buy locally-grown farm products. Most are farms, but a produce packing house, farmers markets, and nurseries were included too. The brochure also lists farm-related events, such as the Canton Mater Fest. The map was created using data from multiple partners including ASAP, Buy Haywood's own list, and others. Newspaper articles helped spread the word about the opportunity to be listed on the map. 10,000 copies were printed. Local partners in creating the map included the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority, Haywood County Economic Development Commission, and North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

Case Study: Dutchess County, NY

Dutchess County provides four "[Farm Fresh Itineraries](#)": Dutchess County From Field To Fork; Dutchess County Historic Gardens & Kitchens; Dutchess County Fruits, Vegetables, Flowers & More; and Eastern Dutchess Farms & Markets.

According to Deputy Tourism Director Lydia Higginson, the county's focus on farm promotion stemmed from a destination analysis done by New York University. The study identified food and farms as a top area of interest, in spite

of a wealth of very well known historic sites and other travel destinations in Poughkeepsie and beyond. Each itinerary features three to five farm or winery destinations, along with a lodging and dining suggestion.

Dutchess has also arranged a Farm Fresh Link transportation service by rail from New York City, connecting with a local bus company to tour the local farm sites.

4. Implement a Farm Signage Program

State-run Farm Signage Programs are common and successful in other states but, unfortunately, weaker in North Carolina due to comparatively restrictive policies at NCDOT. The Department does have three different signage programs that could apply to farms, but each requires a level of dollar investment by the farm and other requirements that make it hard for most to access. For example, participating farms must have quite regular hours and offer a high and predictable level of customer service. It can take one to two years for a requested sign to be placed, and damaged signs are replaced by the business or promoter.

The most promising program appears to be the TODS (Tourist Oriented Directional Signage) program, which targets unincorporated rural areas. This program is heavily used in tourist areas in coastal NC, but underused in the mountains. Businesses must operate eight hours per day, five days per week during their season, and revenue from tourism-related products or services must be at least 40% of total revenue. There is a \$200 annual rental fee for the signs. Contact NCDOT for more details on TODS and Interstate Highway logo signs. The state's recent [eligibility clarification](#) is a must read. Contact the [NCDA Agritourism office](#) for information on the agricultural signage program, but keep in mind that you must operate 10 full months each year to participate.

Working Outside the System. Alternatives to the state-run program are limited but perhaps more promising. In order to work outside the NCDOT signage program, a North Carolina county would have to implement a farm signage program on some combination of county-owned land and rural routes that do not have a right of way assigned to the state other than the maintenance/drainage right of way that extends from the roadside to the ditch. Any such program would have to adhere to the guidelines of state [outdoor advertising laws](#). While it may be challenging to secure the participation of all those with an interest in county-owned land, such a wayfinding program could be a powerful complement to other farm promotions such as printed and online maps, farm trails, and buy local campaigns.



5. Use Farm Products as Event Themes

The [North Carolina Apple Festival](#) is a major community event and tourism draw with multiple apple farm vendors and a 63 year history. However, it doesn't take a lot of farms to organize an event around a local farm product theme. Caldwell County, for example, holds the [North Carolina Blackberry Festival](#) in Lenoir each July. In this case, just one farm, Lineberger's, provides berries for sale and donates berries for eating contests.

Farm product themes make for successful festivals because they are easy to promote and remember; provide logical event tie-ins (recipe contests, chef demonstrations, tastings); and provide a natural link to the location, the season, and local producers.

Most of all, the themed food makes your visitors remember you. Buying apples in Hendersonville, ramps in Robbinsville, or wine in Ronda becomes part of the passage of the seasons for your visitors. They'll look forward to taking home a taste of the mountains and will come back again and again. A festival organized around history or culture may be an equally wonderful experience, but may not have the same seasonal power to draw return crowds.

Trying to start a new farm product-themed festival or event? Look particularly for something people can't find anywhere else – foods unique to our region or culture. There's probably a strawberry festival or two in every state in the union, but only Marion celebrates livermush, and only Black Mountain celebrates sourwood honey.



Blackberry festival, Lenoir.

HOW SUPPORTING FARMS CAN SUPPORT YOUR BOTTOM LINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Western North Carolina mountain counties and towns have lost their traditional economic base. Thousands of jobs have been shed in manufacturing industries, from paper and film in Transylvania County, to furniture in Burke County, to jeans in Murphy, to textiles in Jefferson. An increase in tourism and homebuilding provides some relief, but largely in the form of low-paying jobs and fickle revenue dependent upon fluctuations in the economy.

What's left? What are our burgeoning areas of economic growth? Some parts of our region look at national trends and seek economic growth in our nation's current boom sectors: technology, health care, and specialized services. In many rural counties, however, the answers for the economic future lie in the past: rural, home-based enterprises such as handcrafts and farming; distinctive small-scale, locally-owned manufacturing; and outdoor recreation. Farms are an asset we all still have. Even while farms generate more than a half-billion in sales per year, most farms are only tapping into a small portion of the potential income value of their land. The most common type of farming is grazing calves for future sale at auction. The second most common is hay and forage production. These production models generate a relatively small amount of dollar value per acre.

The growth of interest in local farm products from individual, business, and institutional buyers is documented and quantified in ASAP's [Growing Local](#) research report, published in 2007. This demand, coupled with a relatively sudden surge in available farmland and farming skills presented by the tobacco buyout, creates a perfect storm of economic growth opportunity. With the right tools and practices in place, your county or community can create farm jobs, grow tax revenue, generate capital investment, and build pride by developing its farm sector.



Agriculture creates jobs.
*Fields of Gold Farm,
Henderson County.*

SIX FARM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BEST PRACTICES

1. Integrate Farms into Existing Economic Development Programs

Your existing economic development programs likely already include the following. Here are some areas to examine as you begin to integrate farms into these programs.

- Programs to attract industries and employers in your region.
Do these programs target young farmers, farm entrepreneurs, and farm product processors or marketers who are a natural fit for the type of agriculture in your county?
- A database of sites available for sale or lease to industry and other employers.
Does this program include available prime farmland and other farm infrastructure and facilities?
- Information you produce promoting the amenities, convenience to commerce, and quality of life of your region.
Does this information include the presence of working farms as an asset to quality of life and a potential partner for new employers? See [Howard County, Maryland's website](#) for a well-executed example of this type of information. More locally, www.polkcountyfarms.org is a stellar example as well.
- Collaborations with other nearby counties to develop mutually beneficial economic partnerships and co-branded promotions.
Do you discuss farms in these collaborations?
- Efforts to seek state and federal funds to help spur economic development.
Are you seeking funds specific to agricultural development?
- Support, resources, and information provided for entrepreneurs.
Do you target farm and food processing entrepreneurs with this information?
- Partnerships with a local community college and others to support training a prepared workforce and secure appropriate labor for those growing a business in your county.
Have you assisted farm businesses in securing a stable, trained, quality workforce?

Does your county or multi-county region fund an agricultural economic development position? The [Polk County, NC website](#), and the associated good work, would not be possible without Lynn Sprague, the one-person staff of the county's Office of Agricultural Economic Development.

Rutherford County's Tim Will, Director of the Foothills Connect economic development authority, found funding to not only forward their farm support programs, but also to put staffer Kirk Wilson in the position of Farm Fresh Manager. These leaders are forging new models of farm advocacy within local government structures.

Having the right personnel can also facilitate the development of a county farmland preservation plan. The North Carolina government has established an Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to support farmland preservation, but counties must have a plan in place in order to access the funds. Through programs like NCADFP, it is possible that designated agriculture staff in local government can bring in direct financial benefit equal to or exceeding the cost of their employment.

The good news is: working to build the farm economy and create farm jobs can commence and yield returns quickly, just by making farms a key part of current programs and conversations. The tough news is, as you know, many people aren't used to thinking about farms, job creation, and economic development in conjunction. You'll be a pioneer of sorts, but a pioneer with an important and defensible mission.

Case Study: Haywood County EDC

In 2000, the Haywood County EDC created an economic development strategic plan called Haywood Horizons. George Ivey from Buy Haywood writes, "Haywood Horizons identified the threat of losing cultivated land to development, and the solution of developing more profitable agricultural products in order to improve agribusiness conditions in the county. Specific recommendations called for developing a Haywood County brand

name for agricultural products; developing a strong marketing program for local produce; and developing and implementing a land use plan to support farming and related business, while protecting the natural resources and beauty of the area. These ideas have led to the creation of the Buy Haywood Market Development Project."

2. Use Tax Incentives to Spur Farm Job Creation and Farm Enterprise Investment

Tax incentives are a frequently employed tool to attract commerce, industry, job creation, and investment.

Wisconsin has developed four [Agriculture Development Zones](#), each composed of a set of counties. The Southwestern Zone was initially funded with about two million dollars in tax credits for job creation and capital investment. Grant County Economic Development Director Ron Brisbois reported (in email correspondence):

"I was very happy with the job development and capital investments made by the variety of businesses . . . for the \$2 million [investment by the state] we had approximately 425 new full-time jobs created, and over \$16 million in new building and equipment invested by the businesses."

When asked to provide an example of the use of funds, Ron reported on Woolwich Dairy: "Woolwich Dairy located their first U.S. goat cheese manufacturing facility in Lancaster Wisconsin. They received \$80,000 in tax credits. The City of Lancaster used the Woolwich project to leverage several state and federal infrastructure grants to develop this new business park. Woolwich initially employed 25 and is currently expanding by adding a second

production shift that will add another 12. Woolwich did a site search all over the U.S. for this plant prior to selecting Lancaster. Their plant in Lancaster is a very attractive facility too, not a steel box. An excellent anchor tenant for a new business park. www.woolwichdairy.com is their website.”

The Wisconsin code includes a “jobs credit” of *up to* \$8,000 for each full-time position/job created which is filled by a Wisconsin resident.

While the Woolwich Dairy is a good job creation story, and the correspondence indicates pride in competing successfully to bring in an outside business, we’d like this story even better if it had helped a local farm make a similar expansion.

New York State has several interesting tax incentive and relief laws for farmers, in addition to the basic Present Use Value law similar to laws in North Carolina and many other states. For instance, New York has a set of tax codes related to agricultural structures. Improvements to agricultural buildings on working farms are exempted from increases in property tax value; some temporary agricultural buildings such as greenhouses are also explicitly exempt from property tax.

This is a wise policy because the renovation of a farm building represents an entrepreneurial investment in the future of the farm business, a commitment to keep farmland open and working, and an attempt to modernize and keep up with industry changes. New York also offers a tax exemption for renovations of historic barns. The barns must predate 1936 (North Carolina would likely need a later date) and must have been built to store equipment, farm product, or livestock. Barns renovated for housing are not eligible. The tax code for barn renovations goes beyond just an exemption and provides a tax credit for 25% of the renovation cost.



Even simple structures on working farms add scenic value to rural areas.

Whistlepig Farm, Candler.

This is a wise policy not only because of the economic development value to the farm business, but also because of the aesthetic value of old barns to our scenic landscape. While it’s hard to measure the exact economic impact, in this tourism-driven economy, the loss of an old barn from our roadsides is the loss of an asset to our landscape.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts are a similar strategy, endorsed here by the North Carolina ADFP Trust Fund. This program varies in the localities where it is used, but in all cases it is a voluntary program in which farms agree to limit non-agricultural property development

for ten years in exchange for certain advantages. The benefits might include protection from nuisance lawsuits, some utility assessment relief, priority in receiving certain state grants and cost share funds, and possible variance from town or county ordinances that inconvenience farms. To learn more, see www.ncadfp.org/documents/EVADBrochure.pdf.

3. Help Local Businesses Connect with Farms as Program Participants and Suppliers

Much of ASAP's work consists of matchmaking: connecting farmers with buyers. Recently, a handful of well-known destinations in several Western North Carolina locations have contacted us seeking connections with local farms as suppliers for foodservice, participants in programming, or on-site vendors. We're sure that the inquiries reaching our desks only represent a small portion of the potential interest.

Travel destinations are a great starting point for the work of connecting businesses and farms. Travel destinations may include historic sites and museums, natural features, conference centers, other meeting or wedding facilities, lodging providers with food offerings, and others. These businesses are particularly well-positioned to benefit from connecting with farms, as these connections can boost the appeal of the destinations and draw more visitors and customers.

While promotions encouraging consumers to buy local are common, buy local campaigns aimed at prominent local businesses are less often discussed. Within your economic development jurisdiction, your own matchmaking service to connect farms with businesses can spur the respending of dollars within your community, create jobs, and increase tax revenue.

Major employers with human resources staff are likely partners. Increasingly, these personnel are tasked with connecting workers with healthy food options as a way to decrease health care costs, improve workplace satisfaction, and provide unique benefits to workers. It can be easy (with a little facilitation) to bring local food experiences into the workplace through farm

Case Study: Park Ridge Hospital, Fletcher, NC

One area employer with growing farm to business connections is Park Ridge Hospital in Fletcher. The following article excerpt, from the Hendersonville Times-News, tells some of the story:

Park Ridge goes farm fresh: Hospital chefs serve lip-smacking meals featuring local crops,
By James Shea
Published: Saturday, October 3, 2009

FLETCHER — Chef Robin Pharris carries a tray of sliced potatoes, sets it on a buffet line and turns back to the kitchen. She brings out a tray of sliced zucchini and crookneck squash and puts it in front of the potatoes, getting everything ready for the lunch rush.

The potatoes and squash were grown locally, and like most everything else Pharris serves, was prepared in a healthy manner.

The dining spot is Park Ridge Hospital, but this is not your ordinary cafeteria food. Park Ridge has joined the growing farm-to-hospital movement in the United States. The hospital wants to link itself to the community while serving quality food to patients, their families and hospital personnel.

"Every time I place an order, whether it's broccoli or lettuce, I ask for local," Pharris said. "We pretty much try to showcase what is in season."

Park Ridge is implementing the program with assistance from Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project. The Asheville-based nonprofit has put the hospital in touch with local farms and advised it on ways to use more local food

share subscriptions, farmers markets at workplaces, and product delivery services.

It takes more work to bring locally grown food products into workplace purchasing systems (such as in cafeterias), as these often have agreements with single suppliers, are concerned about insurance or food safety, or are just too busy to bother changing the way they do business.

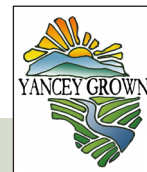
However, it is easier now than it was ten years ago to buy local through the general stream of commerce. Even the biggest players in distribution, such as US Foodservice and Sysco, are turning an eye toward local purchasing due to demand from their customers. As economic development authorities, you are uniquely positioned to provide incentives for making the change to buying local. Incentives can be financial or promotional, or sometimes, just providing the idea and a little connection-making support is incentive enough.

4. Promote Consumer Purchasing of Local Farm Products (and start with your own office)

Buy local campaigns are nothing new. Many communities around the country have implemented buy local campaigns as they foster purchasing that supports downtown shopping districts and independent businesses in the face of growing market saturation by big box stores and internet retailers. Campaigns may be run by Chambers of Commerce, economic development authorities, or independent business owner associations.

Farm-focused buy local campaigns are less widespread, but have the additional power of helping to preserve rural livelihoods and farmland. They also support local commercial businesses that may depend on local farms for some of their supply and for products that contribute to their unique character.

Campaign efforts can be limited to an eat local campaign, or they can go beyond food products to target specific widely-grown farm products from your local area, in their season. For example, counties in Christmas tree producing areas of Western North Carolina can support job preservation and the tax base by promoting consumer purchasing of real, locally grown trees. These growers have an association which provides useful information for any campaign, at www.nc-christmastreetrees.com. Counties with strong locally grown nursery plant industries can support this industry by promoting purchasing of locally grown plants and trees. These promotions can be targeted at individual consumers, garden centers, landscaping contractors, and housing developers.



Case Study: Yancey Grown

In 2009, Yancey County launched a Yancey Grown campaign. First steps included developing a campaign logo, conducting farmer outreach, and creating a local farm directory at www.YanceyGrown.com. Next, the town began to promote the buy Yancey Grown message. Two permanent Yancey Grown billboards were designed, produced, and erected on small parcels of county-owned land on either side of Burnsville.

ASAP provided funding from the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area to help pay for the costs of launching the Yancey Grown campaign. Partners include NC Cooperative Extension agent Stanley Holloway, County Economic Development Director Jake Blood, Yancey County Farm Bureau, and local business sponsors.

Your own office is a great place to start buying local. Doing something yourself makes you better at talking about it and more effective at recruiting and motivating others. Try a local foods office potluck, an employee farmers market trip, or a group subscription to a farm share program that offers office delivery. Split a bulk purchase of locally-grown meat, such as freezer cuts of a side of beef.

Thinking beyond your office, encourage your county purchasing department to motivate local farm purchasing. Putting out a request for landscaping contract bids for a new county building, or a county housing project? Request that bidders source plants locally. Talk with personnel at schools and other county-run institutions that serve food (such as a jail or recreational facilities) about requesting local farm products from their purveyors.

5. Create Agriculture Funds for Disaster Relief and Entrepreneurial Lending

Investment funds are a common economic development tool, providing needed influx of capital to spur job-providing industries to survive and thrive. For farms, this tool is underutilized. Agriculture funds make sense, both in times of disaster and to spur innovation and growth.

Disaster Relief

In April 2007, more than 1200 local daily low temperature records were set during a devastating string of freezes. Fruit producers were hardest hit, but everything from nursery plant crops to spring vegetables to honey to hay was also affected. Measurable losses region wide were in the billions of dollars. Individual Western North Carolina counties saw losses in the millions, with at least 10 million in lost revenue just for apple growers in Henderson. These losses had a huge impact. Weather disasters cause loss of farms. Like any business, farms owe payments on capital investments, bear large overhead costs, and rely on future income to pay current debts. The loss of income caused by weather can be crippling and cause farms to go out of business. If they stay in business, even when next year's harvest is plentiful, farms often lack funds to invest in needed marketing expenses or other costs.

In addition to one time disasters, there are also ongoing losses. The loss of 80% of our region's farms in the last 50 years is a slow, trickling loss of thousands of jobs.

When a plant closes and 500 people lose their income, there may be new job or entrepreneurship training programs, job fairs, or utility payment relief programs. When a major employer faces a fire or other disaster, local support is bountiful.

Case Study: Eat Local in Montgomery County, MD

Montgomery County, Maryland's economic development office spearheads an eat local campaign, in partnership with a larger group of southern Maryland counties. Features include a farm directory, a yearly eat local challenge held in the last week of July, and a farm tour. Their website explains the campaign's approach, which includes tips for menu planning, seasonal eating, and dining out.

BUY LOCAL
FOR REAL ECONOMY (AND GOOD!)

ABOUT US | LINKS | CONTACT

What's Going On
Take the Challenge
Why Buy Local?
Where to Buy Local
How to Participate
Tips and Recipes

Bring the BLC to Your Region
Join the Online Community, where you can create groups and post/view information specific to your area.
Download BLC logos and customizable promotional materials.

Why Buy Local?
Buying local is good for you, good for the local economy and good for the planet! In addition to providing food that's fresh and nutritious, buying from local farms promotes cleaner air and water and reduces our carbon footprint on the planet. In Maryland, if every household purchased just \$12 worth of farm products for eight weeks (usually the summer season), over \$200 million would be put back into the pockets of our farmers. Imagine if every household in the entire USA made a similar commitment.

A Few Reasons to Buy Local

You'll Get Exceptional Taste and Freshness
Local food is fresher and tastes better than food shipped long distances. Local farmers can offer varieties bred for flavor rather than for long shelf life.

You'll Support Independent/Family Farms and a Stronger Local Economy
There's never been a more critical time to support your farming neighbors. With each local food purchase, you ensure that more of your money spent on food goes to the farmer. Buying local food keeps your dollars circulating in your own community.

You'll Enhance Your Family's Health and Safety
Locally grown food retains more nutrients and is less likely to cause foodborne illnesses than food that is shipped from far away. Buying local enables you to choose farmers who may avoid or reduce their use of chemicals, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics.

But when agricultural disasters hit, we tend to look to federal government disaster declarations to provide relief in the form of low-cost lending, or to state agriculture monies for relief programs. These sources are slow-moving and unreliable for most farmers, and should not be the only solution. Local farms need local solutions.

Local economic development interests can help, by providing marketing grants, tax incentives, emergency loan funds, or innovation loan funds. A first step is to gather interested representatives and create a farm disaster plan for your county so that farm crisis readiness is enhanced. It may be that financial resources are sparse. Even so, inter-agency communication, connection, and mobilizing the media and the public can make a difference during times of crisis.

Agricultural Lending

Madison County, New York is one innovator in the use of agricultural funds for farm entrepreneurs. The county economic development office provides an Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund, capitalized with \$99,900 from the USDA Rural Development office.

The county's website reports: "The [loan fund] allows farmers to borrow up to \$10,000 for farm stand infrastructure (construction, design development, market analysis, etc.), value added agricultural product development, training for cheese making, meat cutting, or other agricultural processing initiatives, training and equipment to ensure food safety and security, and promotional materials for agribusinesses (including websites, signage, printed materials etc.)."

Western North Carolina farmers can currently access a grant program through RAFI (Rural Advancement Fund International) for on-farm innovation such as developing new products or markets. In some of our counties this is called [WNC Ag Options](#); in the eastern part of our mountain region, a similar program is operated as the [Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund](#). In both cases, funding is only in place through 2011, and applications far outpace awards. Counties

Technical Note: Economic Potential and Multiplier Effect

ASAP's research, available at www.asapconnections.org/research.html, shows that, based on market surveys and adjustments for seasonality and climate conditions, the total annual amount desired by Western North Carolina consumers and businesses is \$36.5 million for fresh fruits and vegetables and \$451.9 million for all foods. Where does \$36.5 million come from to purchase produce from local farms? If just half of WNC's families spend \$11 each week on locally-grown food for four months of the growing season over \$36.5 million stays in the local economy helping sustain our family farms.

The local multiplier effect (LME) is a term first used by economist John Maynard Keynes in his 1936 book *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* to describe the way that dollars are recirculated within a local economy before leaving through the purchase of an import. According to the theory, \$36.5 million of spending on local farm products would add more than that to the local economy as local farmers re-spend the money on products and services in the local community. There are many factors which influence the number of times dollars are thought to recirculate, but LME's are commonly reported to range from 1.5 to 3.0. Within that range, the impact to the local economy of \$36.5 million in spending on local farm products would be \$55 million to \$109 million. \$452 million of spending on local farm products would add, according to the multiplier formula, between \$678 million to nearly \$1.4 billion.

interested in agricultural development would be wise to look ahead and create their own version of this program. Money may be granted or loaned. Either way, the goals are similar: to spur farm entrepreneurship, create jobs, boost tax revenue, and preserve farmland and farm heritage.

6. Use Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to Preserve Farmland

Readers may be familiar with purchase of development rights (PDR), typically by a governmental entity or land trust. (Though the government entity or land trust makes the purchase they do not gain any actual rights to the farmland.) PDR programs may offer landowners cash and tax benefits in exchange for agricultural conservation easements (restrictions on future use) placed on the land. The purpose of these programs is to ensure the land's perpetual availability for agricultural use. Phyllis Stiles of the [Blue Ridge Forever](#)--a coalition of ten land trusts--reports that PDR has been used to preserve at least 150 farms in WNC. Some farms have been preserved with specifically agricultural conservation easements and others with conservation easements that are not limited to agricultural use. Historically, there have been fewer resources for agricultural conservation than for more traditional natural resource conservation. But, when possible, land trusts may use a combination of federal, state, and private funds to assist farmland owners who wish to protect all or a portion of their land but cannot afford to donate all of their development rights or the closing costs. Preserving farmland for its cultural, economic, scenic, and wildlife habitat values is a major focus of the [Blue Ridge Forever Conservation Vision for Western North Carolina](#).

In an environment of growing development pressure, a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) system is another promising means to preserve farmland being used in other states. Under TDR, the purchase of development rights is by a property developer rather than a land trust or

Case Study: TDR in Burlington County, New Jersey

Burlington County ranks sixth in the nation in farmland preserved, with more than 50,000 acres protected against development for non-farm purposes. This is more than 45% of the agricultural land in the county. Of the preserved land, a little more than half was set aside through the purchasing of easements. Farmland acquisitions were funded in part from a voter-approved property-tax levy of four cents per \$100 of land value. In a 2006 election, this levy was extended until 2036.

Those learning about TDR often wonder how the program can ensure that owners keep the land in agriculture, rather than just develop it into very expensive housing on large lots. In fact, the program can't make anybody stay in farming, but only keeps owners from taking the land out of agricultural use. A county representative states "the owner can't take the land out of agricultural use permanently, such as if they didn't mow and let trees grow; or if they neglected drainage facilities and the land reverted to wetland status. . . . [in these situations] we can step in, mow the land . . ." and at least ensure that the land remains farmable, even if not actively farmed.

A major strength of the Burlington County program is the amount of contiguous land preserved. Most of the farms preserved by both PDR and TDR are adjacent to other preserved parcels owned by different farmers. Contiguous preservation is bound to be more effective for the long term viability of the agricultural sector than a mostly-developed landscape with pockets of preserved farmland here and there.

government. The developer does not gain any actual rights to the farmland, but instead gains a “development credit” or “density bonus” which can be used to build elsewhere at a higher density than ordinarily permitted by the base zoning. Typically, a TDR program will specify a sending area—“land that local government wants to save for agriculture or other open-space uses,” and a receiving area—“land selected for its capacities (sewer, water, roads) to sustain denser growth.” (definitions from [American Farmland Trust](#)). Development credits are purchased from the sending area, and “spent” in the receiving area. Local planners create the detailed rules governing a TDR program. It must be determined whether there is a fixed formula for the cost of purchasing development credits, or whether this cost is left to negotiation between the landowner and the developer. It must also be determined how much density bonus is earned by how much easement purchase.

While Orange and Chatham counties have led the state in exploring launching TDR programs, to date, North Carolina has not passed enabling legislation to allow TDRs. For those interested in learning more about TDR, a local organization taking the lead in sharing expertise is [Land of Sky Regional Council](#). Even if you are outside the four county region served by Land of Sky, they can help direct you, or work with you through [your own area’s regional council](#). Tom Elmore or Linda Giltz at Land of Sky would be the best contacts for this information. Tom Elmore helped the American Farmland Trust (AFT) research and write [Planning for an Agricultural Future: A Guide for North Carolina Farmers and Local Governments](#) (2007). This document, as well as the Blue Ridge Forever Conservation Vision, are well worth reading for their insight on ways government can support farms that go beyond the focus on economic development and tourism development in these pages.



Creasman Farms, Edneyville.

THREE BIG PICTURE STRATEGIES

Where do you start? Some of the programs discussed may require building political capital and years of commitment to implementation. Some can be implemented right away with minimal cost or political turmoil. Regardless of your specific programmatic goals, there are simple and specific steps you can take to build your community into a more farm-friendly one.

1. Measure and Understand Your Farm Economy

It's hard to make the case for supporting farms if you don't know how many there are, what they grow, and some of their stories. Here are a few approaches to making a "farm assessment" of your service area.

- Ask your local [USDA Farm Services Agency](#) office to share farm lists or basic statistics for numbers and types of farms. Talk with them about the status and needs of farmers.
- Ask your local [Agricultural Extension Agent](#) to share farm lists or take you to visit farms. Talk with them about farmers.
- See who's listed in the [ASAP Local Food Guide](#). Visit your local farmers tailgate market.
- Read your county's profile from the [2007 Ag Census data](#).
- Launch an original study of agriculture in your county. This work may include analyzing data from the above sources, interviewing farmers, and interviewing farmer advocates. As in ASAP's [Growing Local](#) report, you may also combine a farm assessment with an investigation into the demand for locally grown farm products. You may contract with ASAP to do this work for you.

2. Actively Recruit Farmers and Farm Product Entrepreneurs to Serve Leadership Roles

When farmers are part of Chambers of Commerce, citizen committees, elected governing bodies, and other decision-making structures, work on behalf of farms can become embedded in existing processes rather than haphazard, and the needs of farms will not be forgotten.



*Yellow Branch Farm,
Graham County.*

It may take active outreach to find and develop farmer leadership. Tourism promoters in particular have told us that they can only support farms to the extent that farms are willing to be “joiners” and share their information. But historically farms have not done so. With this in mind, work through your personal networks to find a farmer or two who are willing to serve as representative voices in civic structures. Farmers will not only provide valuable input, but could also call for broader farmer participation as needed in your economic development and tourism development plans.

3. Connect Your Local Farms and Food Businesses with ASAP’s Promotional Tools and Programs

In this region, you don’t need to invent the wheel when it comes to promoting farms. ASAP has several programs available that can be put to work for you. We already strive to serve all of Western North Carolina, but your assistance can improve our reach while also serving your needs. Our Local Food Guide is a prime example of a big tool that can still work in small, local ways. This directory covers a large area and many farms, but it can also serve as your local food and farm directory until the time you have the resources to create your own.

Below is a list of some basic ways you can help us serve your region of Western North Carolina— some ideas are reprinted from the text above; others are new here. Contact us to learn more about implementing these ideas.

- Encourage more farms and businesses near you to get listed in the Local Food Guide. Basic farm listings are free and business listings are very affordable. When you register for the guide, the same process can also register you for our farm to business trade directory and our Appalachian Grown certification.
- In 2010, ASAP is producing an online trip planner for Blue Ridge Parkway travelers, identifying local food and farm destinations along the parkway. Attractions in your area listed in the Local Food Guide will be asked to participate. You may also have the opportunity to directly advertise your community in this online and mobile technology enabled resource.
- Recruit businesses and other public locations to stock and display Local Food Guides. ASAP already ships the guide to each county visitor center. Include the guide in your welcome packet for new residents and prospects. Work with local hotels, inns, and rental cabins to include a Local Food Guide in each room to get your visitors out to the farm.
- Encourage use of the Appalachian Grown logo to identify locally farmed products sold in your county. The logo is available as a product sticker or case sticker for farms, or as a door sticker for retail partners. It is also available as a 12”x12” coroplast sign for use at farm stands and other stores.
- ASAP can produce farmer profiles—signs or posters highlighting your local farms—for display where their food is sold.
- Make sure your farmers market managers are aware of ASAP’s marketing support programs.
- Promote the adoption of a Farm to School program. Schools that serve locally grown food can be a real attraction for parents concerned about the health of their children. Children visiting farms on a field trip can be a wonderful promotional event. What better photo opportunity than a child on a farm? Contact us for help developing your Farm to School program. ASAP periodically offers matching funds for farms to promote themselves, create signs, or package their products, and for businesses promoting their purchasing of local food.
- Both ASAP and Blue Ridge National Heritage Area staff act as information bureaus of sorts, providing local food and farm information to fulfill year-round requests from media within and beyond the region. Make sure we know what’s going on where you work.

Sites Referenced

Readers viewing this document on paper or in a format without working hyperlinks can refer to web addresses below.

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p. 13, Dutchess County Farm Fresh Itineraries

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p. 14, NC Sign Eligibility Clarification

www.ncdot.org/doh/PRECONSTRUCT/traffic/tepl/Topics/T-08/T-08_eligibility.pdf

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www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/index.asp