



Rhode Island Food Policy Council

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RI Food Policy Council Unveils Food System “Snapshots” to State Leaders at Inter-agency Food & Nutrition Policy Advisory Council (IFNPAC) meeting, Brings Local Food Systems Data to Forefront

Providence, RI October 2015 – The Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) unveiled its food system snapshots last week to the Inter-agency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council, sharing data about the food systems of all 39 Rhode Island cities and towns, as well as for the entire state. All 40 snapshots are available to download on the RIFPC website at www.rifoodcouncil.org.

On the heels of Governor Raimondo’s announcement that Rhode Island will be developing a State Food Plan, the release of these data will help stakeholders better understand the food systems of their state and communities, and identify leverage and action points from which to evolve and improve. RIFPC Chair Ken Payne notes, “food systems have to work at a community level, otherwise people, especially the most vulnerable, are put at risk; therefore the components of the food systems need to be understood locally. Let’s be clear- living in a place that has great, nutritious food is wonderful. We in RI are blessed to have an outstanding food culture. Good local food is a building block to a healthy future.”

These fact sheets are a first: comprehensive, locality-by-locality information about the food system in a state. They bring attention to the importance of food system impacts and issues – economic, social, and environmental – while remaining accessible and available for laypeople and experts alike. “The ability to collect, analyze, and clearly communicate data is central to our work to improve health outcomes for *all* Rhode Islanders,” said Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health. “I applaud the Rhode Island Food Policy Council for this innovative new initiative. It will help us better understand the food system in Rhode Island communities so that we can eliminate gaps in access to food and boost our food economy, which will benefit the entire state.”

Leo Pollock, RIFPC Network Director, noted that this was an unprecedented effort, “we had no roadmap for how to proceed, and we learned a great deal along the way.” Lessons learned include that in some cases, there is no available source for specific data by municipality. The



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number of farms is one such data point. No entity maintains a complete list of farms, so the best municipal numbers were compiled from RIDEM and Farm Fresh RI lists, which are incomplete. The 2012 Census of Agriculture does not provide information at the level of municipality, so as a result, the number of farms reported in the fact sheet for Rhode Island was quite different from that of the Census.

While these fact sheets represent a single moment in a local food system, over time, as future series of “snapshots” are developed, the set as a whole will provide a dynamic picture of the evolving food system in our state and communities. “Rhode Island is experiencing exciting growth in its agricultural and local food sector,” said DEM Director Janet Coit. “These snapshots offer a valuable glimpse into the diversity and breadth of our food system; we look forward to working with the RI Food Policy Council and other partners to continue to build upon resources like this to shape stronger food policies for our state.”

The work of the RIFPC is made possible by the generous contributions of the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, van Beuren Charitable Foundation, and the John Merck Fund. Their contributions, along with funds from the Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership, supported the development of these fact sheets.

ABOUT:

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council envisions a day when Rhode Island’s food system will be a national model because of the strength of its local food system and its success at achieving community food security and optimal public health. The RIFPC network represents all sectors of Rhode Island’s food system: producers, processors, distributors, retailers, consumers, and resource recyclers. Launched in 2011, the RIFPC is dedicated to creating partnerships, developing policies, and advocating for improvements to the local food system to increase and expand its capacity, viability, and sustainability.

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