

FFI Regional Impacts

2012-2013



Six rural counties in Northeast Iowa (Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek) are working together to improve the health and well-being of children and their families in the region. The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative (FFI) is focusing efforts on four strategic areas: K-12 schools, early childcare, local food systems development, and active living. Early childhood was added as a new strategic area in 2012-13. What follows is a summary of outcomes and impacts brought by this collaboration and implications for children and families in the region.

Youth Engagement

- 17 schools had an FFI Youth 4-H Team in 2012-13, with 217 members. These teams give taste tests of healthy foods, organize events for active play, teach elementary students about local food, and more.
- 46 youth leaders participated in planning, advocating, and implementing active transportation activities in 2013.
- Ten former FoodCorps or AmeriCorps service members who served with FFI entered professions or graduate programs related to health, nutrition, active living, and/or education (100% of those tracked).
- Seven out of 10 former service members said FFI influenced their career choice or educational path. Four said their service with FFI helped them discover their strengths and weaknesses and gain confidence.



FFI Impacts on K-12 Schools and Early Childhood

In 2013, the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative worked with 16 active school wellness teams in the region and two early childhood care providers.

FFI works with schools to provide nutrition education and access to healthy food.

- FFI Resource Contacts and workgroup leaders provided 599 hours of nutrition and local food programming in schools.
- 16 FFI school districts had a total of 23 school gardens in 2012-13.
- 13 school districts have incorporated a garden into classroom curriculum in at least one grade level.
- 26 parent outreach events were held in 2012-13 in communities, schools, and early childhood settings.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) work in Northeast Iowa is one-of-a-kind.

- Northeast Iowa is bringing SRTS— a traditionally urban program— to rural populations.
- It is the only SRTS program in Iowa, and likely even the country, taking a regional approach to SRTS within a rural setting and has been nationally recognized for its efforts and expertise.
- Ten new walking schools buses were added in 2012-13 for a total of 17 buses in the region, reaching nearly 200 students.

FFI works to increase physical activity through infrastructure, policy, and program changes.

- Three partners installed new playgrounds to encourage physical activity—the Northeast

Iowa Community College (NICC) Child Development Center began installing a natural outdoor playground and garden, Decorah Community School District (CSD) added a natural playground, and MFL MarMac CSD installed a learning landscape.

Several schools and early childhood care providers rewrote or expanded their wellness policies in 2013.

Highlights from new written policies include:

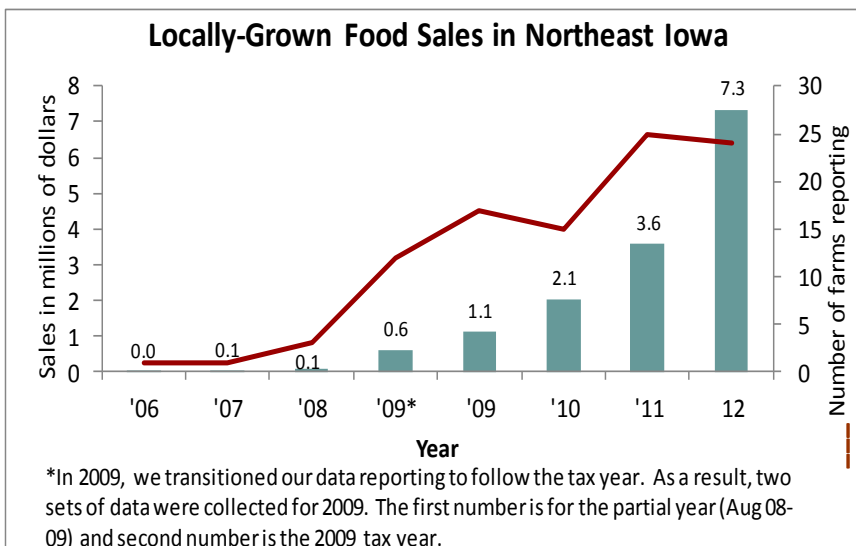
- Clayton Ridge CSD and Decorah CSD passed comprehensive wellness policies.
- Allamakee CSD added to its wellness policy that no restaurant-labeled foods or carbonated beverages are allowed during meal times and Central CSD added provisions for nutrition education and local food procurement.
- Northeast Iowa Head Start wrote its first wellness policy. Head Start is fulfilling the federal requirement to include nutrition education through its new Farm to Preschool program.
- The NICC Child Development Center implemented two new policies: it provided the development center cook with a purchasing card allowing for local food purchases and began paying for staff meals so staff can eat meals with children, thereby serving as role models eating new, healthy foods.

14,551 K-12 students were enrolled in NE Iowa schools in 2012-13.

85% of these students were reached by FFI programming. Over 2 in 5 of these students are low-income children.

Economic Impact of Local Food

- **Northeast Iowa made rapid progress in creating a food hub in 2013.** The Iowa Food Hub aggregates and distributes foods produced in Northeast Iowa to schools, grocers, and workplaces.
- In 2013, **nine workplaces were being served by the food hub, serving about 200 families in Northeast Iowa and the surrounding region, with total sales over \$100,000.**
- Approximately **50 farmers are selling food through the Iowa Food Hub, many of which are marginalized farmers.** An October 2013 survey of 27 NIFF Coalition farmers showed that 93% are marginalized in one of three ways: female farmers, beginning farmers, or operating limited-resource farms as defined by the USDA.
- In 2012, **14 new local farmers or food enterprises took root in NE Iowa.**
- In 2012, **6 on-farm jobs were added by local food farmers** in Northeast Iowa and 2.5 jobs were created by buyers of local food as a result of their use of local food.
- School purchases of local food were up by 40% from \$14,444 in 2011-12 to \$20,236 in 2012-13. Of the 15 schools reporting in 2012-13, 11 increased purchases of local food compared to 2011-12.
- **An Iowa-wide data collection on local food sales and purchases was modeled after FFI's annual data collection.** The state report released by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture showed 74 institutions purchased nearly \$9 million in local food in 2012. If all 74 buyers participating in the survey increased local food purchases to 30 percent of their total food budget, these markets would have reported more than \$21.5 million in local food purchases in 2012, potentially creating 93 new full-time jobs. The state report can be found at: www.leopold.iastate.edu/local-food.
- **Tracked food sales by farmers more than doubled** from 2011 to 2012. Sales of local food in 2012 were \$7.3 million, up from \$3.6 million in 2011. Although vegetable farms struggled due to drought in 2012, local meat and dairy operations saw growth in sales.

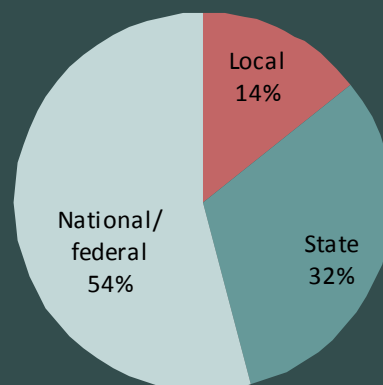


Communities Invest in Community Work by Supporting FFI

FFI is thankful for the financial support it has received from national, state, and local donors, which has led to many successes.

These funds make it possible for FFI to increase local food production and consumption, create healthy home and school environments, engage youth as advocates and leaders, and ensure children and residents have safe and accessible routes to school and throughout their communities. **To continue FFI's success, increased financial support from the community will be essential.**

Please join community members in supporting community work; visit www.iowafoodandfitness.org to learn more.



Financial support by source geography (2008-2013)

The Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative is grounded in the work of these core partners:

