

Name of Report A Plan for Atlanta's Sustainable Food Future

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Mission Statement & Rationale The Atlanta Local Food Initiative (ALFI) is a network that joins individuals, corporations, nonprofits, universities, and governmental agencies to build a local food system that enhances human health, promotes environmental renewal, fosters local economies, and links rural and urban communities.

The Atlanta Local Food Initiative envisions a transformed food system in which every Atlantan has access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food produced by a thriving network of sustainable farms and gardens.

Municipal food initiatives that encourage sustainably produced food improve urban livability, health, and wealth. Local food systems encompass activities such as: regional food distribution systems, community gardens, farmers' markets, pastured livestock, farm-to-school programs, urban agriculture, and green roof designs where food is grown on building rooftops.

Developing a strong, local food system is an exciting opportunity for Metro Atlanta that has the potential to deliver a multitude of benefits:

- Promote healthy eating
- Reduce petroleum consumption
- Preserve greenspace and farmland
- Reduce harmful environmental impacts
- Minimize pesticide exposure
- Build local economies
- Create new jobs
- Strengthen the social fabric
- Celebrate our food heritage

Initiated By In 2005, a group of interested citizens and organizations began a dialogue to create a more sustainable food system for Metro Atlanta resulting in the creation of the Atlanta Local Food Initiative (ALFI)

Funding Source 2005 Food Conference was supported by:

- USDA Risk Management Agency's Community Outreach and Assistance Program
- Emory University
- University of Georgia
- SARE

Budget

Timeframe

Development Process began in 2005
June 2005 – State-wide Food Conference
Summer 2006 – Buy Local Campaign developed
2006 – Two-day Planning Meeting
Summer 2008 – Published: A Plan for Atlanta's Sustainable Food Future
May 2009 – 2nd Food Conference
A Plan for Atlanta's Sustainable Food Future (Summer 2008)

Appendix I

Highlights:

Goal Framework

- Public-private partnership model
- Community-wide input
- **Simple & effective goal framework:**
 - Supply, Consumption, Access
 - § 8 associated goal-objectives
- Clear, concise, and convincing rationale (see Appendix I, p. 3-4)
- Has conducted two Food Conferences

Goal Framework:

5 years

Supply

1. Increase sustainable farms, farmers and food production in Metro Atlanta.
 - a. Complete an inventory that identifies agricultural land and land suitable for urban farming on public and private lands
 - b. Develop policies to allow for food production on public lands.
 - c. Identify private landowners willing to establish urban farms on their property for a period of five years or more.
 - d. Recruit growers who can farm urban lands.
2. Expand number of community gardens.
 - a. Launch a series of new community gardens on City of Atlanta park land.
 - b. Initiate Adopt-a-Garden policies in other municipal parks and recreation programs.
3. Encourage backyard gardens, edible landscaping, and urban orchards.

Consumption

4. Launch Farm-to-School programs (gardens, cafeteria food, and curriculum).
 - a. Develop goals and policies with school districts to encourage school gardens and local food procurement.
 - b. Provide educational workshops on farm to school programming and technical assistance on developing school gardens.
 - c. Establish a Farm to School Network for Atlanta.

5. Expand cooking skills for simple dishes made from fresh, locally grown foods.
 - a. Integrate cooking demonstrations and skills into the education curriculum.
 - b. Partner with cooking organizations and schools to expand public education around seasonal menus.
 - c. Launch a “Family Meal” campaign to encourage eating fresh, local foods at home with your family.
 - d. Partner with WIC for distribution of healthy recipes with local, seasonal food.
6. Develop local purchasing guidelines and incentives for governments, hospitals, and Atlanta institutions.
 - a. Introduce local purchasing policies for local and state governments

Access

7. Increase local, fresh food availability in underserved neighborhoods.
 - a. Increase farm stands in underserved neighborhoods.
 - b. Integrate fresh food options—sustainably produced fruits, vegetables, pastured meats and dairy—into existing neighborhood outlets that sell food.
 - c. Expand food production within communities by starting new community gardens and urban agriculture projects
8. Increase and promote local food in grocery stores, farmers’ markets, restaurants, and other food outlets.
 - a. Launch annual *buy local* campaigns.
 - b. Improve distribution of the Georgia Organics Local Food Guide and online resources to direct consumers to local food sources.
 - c. Encourage grocery and convenience stores to purchase from local producers and improve signage of locally grown food.
 - d. Encourage businesses to serve locally produced food at their events

Key Partners

ALFI Partnership groups include:

- [Georgia Organics](#)
- [Emory University Sustainable Food Initiative](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [DeKalb County Board of Health](#)
- [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#)
- [Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger](#)
- [Georgia Department of Human Resources WIC Branch](#)
- [Georgia Interfaith Power and Light](#)

- [Heifer International](#)
- [Les Dames d'Escoffier](#)
- [Oakhurst Community Garden](#)
- [Park Pride Atlanta](#)
- [Sevananda Natural Foods Market](#)
- [Slow Food Atlanta](#)
- [Truly Living Well Natural Urban Farms](#)
- [The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and Center for Urban Agriculture](#)

Note:

Speakers & Conference
Fee

- Mark Winne was keynote speaker at 2005 Conference
- They charged \$25 for conference
- Peggy Bartlet from Emory University was co-chair (with Alice Rolls)
 - Could be speakers??

Best Practices:

Food Conference
Outcomes

In Atlanta in June, 2005, over eight-five participants joined together with experts from around the country to learn about local food efforts. The Atlanta Local Food Initiative emerged from that meeting, is now led by a steering committee of thirty, and currently has three primary efforts:

- **Buy Local Campaign:** ALFI is developing a *Buy Local* campaign for summer, 2006. The campaign will help consumers understand the nutritional, economic, and environmental benefits of local food and where to purchase them. This effort complements the Local Food Guide being prepared by Georgia Organics, to appear in the spring of 2006. The *Buy Local* campaign also builds on the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Georgia Grown label and supports new marketing opportunities for Georgia farmers.
- **Expand Local Food in Underserved Communities:** Expanding local food in underserved communities is ALFI's second initiative, in partnership with the farmers markets currently run by the Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger. Working with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Sevananda Natural Foods, and the Atlanta Community Food Bank, the effort also seeks to expand urban supply by working with new farmers and cooperatives in Taliaferro County and other parts of middle Georgia. A coalition of African-American churches and a new senior WIC program of farmers markets are connected to this effort.
- **Robust ALFI Committee:** A robust ALFI means actions to keep our network strong and growing, increase our visibility and clarity of our message, and find resources for our group. Our efforts will be directed mainly toward supporting the two above initiatives. The Executive Committee will consist of Peggy and Alice as co-coordinators, plus a representative or two from each of the 2 project committees.

Best Practices:

Focus on "Local"

Key components to include in the definition of "local:"

1. enhanced taste and freshness
2. supports small family farms and therefore a thriving rural economy
3. congruent with socially conscious actions to protect our land, air, and water

Steering Committee agreed to focus on "local" first, later adding distinctions for sustainably grown, organic, humane, etc. Discussed how the existing standards for the Georgia Grown label might be changed to be consistent with their definitions and promotion of locally grown foods that don't take a long ride within the resource-dependent distribution system that takes them out of state before bringing them back again.

Next steps include:

- Creating a message for the market, with the goal of educating consumers, raising awareness, and connecting consumers with options (using a Local Food Guide).
- Having materials ready for distribution at markets and public spaces (potentials include: bumper stickers, postcard flyers, brochures, window stickers for restaurants, placards, bookmarks).

Best Practices:

Metric Indicators

Metrics that could be used to gauge success:

- increase in farmers markets throughout the state,
- increase in percentage of groceries sourced locally,
- increase in restaurants with "buy local" philosophies,
- increase in number of CSA consumers or farms,
- increase in the amount of organic/sustainable acreage in the state

Steering Committee agreed to do some research to establish current benchmark to allow measures of progress.

Best Practices:

ALFI Strengths – A conversation with Alice Rolls, Executive Director of Georgia Organics

- Steering Committee (SC) is a diverse collection of people and organizations that represents the complexity of food system issues
- ALFI worked with DeKalb County and Emory University to conduct Community Food Assessment
- Bi-monthly Steering Committee meetings
 - Bi-monthly Executive Committee meetings are held in alternating months with a smaller group of people
- Open door policy, some SC members have come and gone, but a core group remains
 - Meeting location rotates as each member organization takes turns hosting the group and providing food
 - A friendly atmosphere is created and members are fully committed to the process and accomplishment of goals

- Members feel that their partnership and participation in ALFI has created synergy as they are able to leverage efforts for the mutual benefit of ALFI and the individual organization
- 2nd Food Conference held in May 2009
 - Some different players, similar process
 - Partnered with CDC to bring Pollan to 2nd Food Conference
- ALFI asked participants to make a commitment to carrying out goals, but is limited in capacity to hold organizations accountable for accomplishing goals
 - ALFI is not an implementer, they are an instigator for organizations to meet goals, galvanizing buy-in and support for their shared vision

**Long-Term
Outcomes &
Accomplishments**

The ALFI network also supports a range of allied efforts, which include:

- Wellness policies for Georgia schools that include fresh, healthy food
- Regional planning and farmland preservation with the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Atlanta Regional Health Forum
- Community gardens in city parks with the Community Garden Coalition
- Emory Sustainable Food Initiative with Emory University
- Local Food Guide developed by Georgia Organics
- Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program with Georgia Department of Health/WIC

2005-06 Accomplishments

Coalition Building

- Formed a robust and active Steering Committee comprised of representatives of close to 40 agencies and organizations. The Steering Committee meets bimonthly (15 meetings to date) and exchanges information, ideas and resources. (*ongoing*)
- Carried out best practices research on 13 areas of possible impact. (*Fall, 2005*)
- Conducted a 2-day strategic planning to develop goals for 2006-2007. (*February, 2006*)
- Developed and submitted several grant applications (in cooperation with other organizations) to SARE, Community Foundation of Metropolitan Atlanta, and The Kerr Center, which resulted in grants being awarded by the DeKalb County Board of Health (2006-07) and the USDA's Risk Management Agency through the Agricultural Law Center of Drake University. (*2004-05*)

- Supported dialogue with politicians, educators, policy-makers (see below)

Healthy Food for All Neighborhoods

- Worked with DeKalb County Board of Health to carry out an assessment of availability and cost of healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables in two neighborhoods. (*Fall, 2006 – Winter 2007*)
- Worked with The Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger (The Hunger Coalition) to apply for grants to expand their local foods market capacity for WIC families and other households in Southwest Atlanta. (*ongoing*)
- Arranged for rainwater capture equipment to be donated to the Hunger Coalition to expand their irrigation capacity. (*Fall, 2006*)
- Facilitated participation by Hunger Coalition staff in a farmer mentoring program developed by Georgia Organics (*Fall, 2006*).
- Helped to develop Georgia's first Senior WIC program in cooperation with the State of Georgia Department of Human Services. As a result, five pilot farmers' market sites were created across the state. (*2006*)

Local Food Awareness and Outreach

- Raised awareness about local food issues among the more than seventy representatives of the Atlanta Regional Commission's *Livable Centers Initiative*. A formal presentation to this ARC group by ALFI co-chair Alice Rolls was designed to promote appreciation of the importance of the connection between urban design and food, using examples and information about the viability of community gardens, farmers markets, procurement and policies, etc. (*Fall, 2006*)
- Arranged for a GSU marketing class to develop and carry out a survey of customers attending two farmers markets, one located in the upscale Morningside neighborhood and another in a middle to low income neighborhood in Southwest Atlanta. Preliminary survey results have been compiled and shared with the ALFI Steering Committee. (*Summer, 2006*)
- Worked with Sevananda Natural Foods Cooperative to expand its commitment to local food through a board resolution. The popular Co-op now distributes ALFI brochures and includes information about regional food issues in its monthly newsletter. The Co-op has also

expanded labeling and procurement of local foods that it sells.
(*ongoing*)

- Strengthened relationship with Georgia Department of Agriculture's "Georgia Grown" program (*Spring-Summer, 2006*)
- Produced a pamphlet promoting local food issues, including issues of farmers markets and community gardens, that was distributed to the 20,000 members of the National Association of Health Officers. (*Fall, 2005*)
- Helped produce and distribute 38,000 copies the Georgia Organics' *Local Food Guide* across the metro region (*Summer - Fall, 2006*)
- Produced an ALFI informational brochure and a "Buy Local" postcard and distributed these materials to attendees at several local and regional events and conferences and to customers at area farmers' markets. (*2005 - 06*)
- As a result of discussions with other members, ALFI steering committee member Dan May and his wife ate primarily local and regional foods for 30 days and earned significant media coverage in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* based on his experience on a "localvore" diet (*October, 2006*)
- Initiated outreach with the interfaith liaison of the Dekalb Board of Health to prepare presentation on "faith and foods" in early 2007.

APPENDIX I: A Plan for Atlanta's Sustainable Food Future: Full Report
(**separate attachment**)