

West Central Minnesota Food Policy Council

The West Central Minnesota Food Policy Council (FPC) is a diverse and inclusive group of individuals and organizations interested in improving food policy in Clay, Becker, Otter Tail, and Wilkin Counties. The FPC works to identify policy and program opportunities to expand small-scale farming and improve access to more fresh and nutritious food for all West Central Minnesota residents. The FPC also works to empower residents to live more sustainably. The FPC is guided in its work by the West Central Minnesota Regional Food System Plan published in September 2023.

Mission

To advance policies and programs that advance an accessible, ecologically sustainable, low carbon, and equitable food system that provides healthy and culturally appropriate food for the community.

Purpose

The purpose of the FPC is to:

1. Advise on Laws, Policies and Programs.

- Conduct qualitative and quantitative research studies that provide ongoing opportunities to solicit community input and help inform the development of effective food system policy and programs.
- Support laws, policies and programs that create fair labor practices within the local food system.
- Build political will to support innovation and positive change to strengthen the food system.

2. Foster a Sustainable and Fair Food System.

- Identify ways to make the food system diverse, innovative, just, and resilient.
- Improve the economic viability of small-scale agriculture and foster sustainable business models for food system entrepreneurs.
- Advocate for supportive food system infrastructure including facilities for storage, processing and distribution.
- Promote resource conservation, energy efficiency and waste recovery across the food system.

3. Promote Food Security.

- Promote affordable access to fresh, nutritious, local and ecologically sustainable food for all West Central Minnesota's residents.
- Recognize and enhance the role of the food and agriculture system in conserving and regenerating West Central Minnesota's natural resources and environment.

4. Raise Awareness & Build Coalitions.

- Foster a culture that values nutritious food and healthy low carbon eating habits.
- Emphasize the economic, environmental, and social benefits of a resilient local food system.
- Promote the knowledge and skills to grow, process, and cook nutritious food.
- Build strong, inclusive networks between producers, distributors and eaters to promote efficiency, social fabric and economic viability throughout the food system.

Subcommittees

Subcommittee membership will be the heart and soul for determining priorities, developing an action plan, and implementing that plan.

There is a potential of 8 subcommittees which include: Better communication between food systems actors, Support producers in marketing local foods, Improve consumer education re: food sources and availability, Improve consumer education regarding food waste, Provide more support for emerging farmers, Expand support for urban agriculture, Reduce food insecurity, Invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

We are currently recruiting for the following subcommittees below. We are electing to start with three subcommittees to ensure success in these early years of our organization. If you would like to chair one of the other five remaining subcommittees, we will help with recruitment.

Subcommittees will meet a minimum of every other month and more often if desired. Meetings will be held virtually for convenience of time and eliminating personal expense towards travel.

Expand Support for Urban Agriculture – Scott Roser, Chair

- Promote urban food forests and fruit orchards.
- Increase access to community gardens as well as the tools for community garden users,
- Connect people to season extension information and resources – high tunnels, deep winter greenhouses, etc.
- Promote agricultural techniques that don't require a lot of land like hydroponics, aquaponics, aeroponics, and container gardening.
- Increase access to public education about the basics of growing your own food.

Reducing Food insecurity – Anna Johnson, Chair 3rd Thursday/Mo. @ 3pm

- Support coordination with food banks and food shelves to ensure efficient delivery of services.
- Establish or increase city/county funding for food banks, pantries, and hot meal programs.
- Support infrastructure at food pantries and food banks to increase fresh food availability, especially refrigeration and freezer units.
- Reduce barriers that individuals face to accessing food security resources, including knowing that they are eligible, and enrollment/re-enrollment.

Support Producers in Marketing Local Foods – Lyubov Slashcheva 1st Monday/Mo. @ 3:30pm

- Providing training opportunities to local food producers on marketing their products (direct sales and e-commerce), telling the story of their farm/business and products, creating, or making the most from social media and online sales platforms.
- Promote the use of SNAP, WIC, and Market Buck programs at Farmers Markets, etc.
- Partner with school districts and universities in the region to adopt their own local food purchasing policies.
- Connecting food producers to consumers (markets), direct sales, Farm to School, Farmers Market, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), food co-ops/hubs, e-commerce, food distributors, back hauling, etc.