

# Campaign Promotes Locally Grown Food

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would seem, are yearning to find each other. They are like two highway crews tunneling through a mountain from opposite sides. The mountain in this illustration represents all the complexities of today's marketplace, including issues of processing, transportation, marketing, and government regulation of the food supply chain. What they need in order to succeed is some kind of navigation system to guide their efforts.

Such a navigation system is becoming available in southeast Pennsylvania, with promise for other regions of the state in coming years.

Recently in downtown Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) and its partners, the Philadelphia Fair Food Project and Farm to City, unveiled a campaign called "Buy Fresh/Buy Local" that will aim to connect

farmers and consumers through a network of farmers' markets, restaurants, caterers, and other market venues, focusing specifically on Philadelphia for this first stage of the campaign.

"Philadelphia is an exciting city for food," noted Bridget Croke of the Philadelphia Fair Food Project. "Restaurants participating in the Buy Fresh/Buy Local campaign make special dishes featuring locally raised ingredients. For instance, Django Gypsy Caf serves a delicious Atlantic Bluefish and creamy mushroom polenta made with locally grown black forest mushrooms, and a smoked tomato broth made with locally grown tomatoes and bacon made from locally raised pork."

What is local food? The campaign focuses on Pennsylvania food grown within a 75-mile radius of Philadelphia, reaching as far as the areas around Lancaster, Reading, and Allentown.

"We are blessed to have a tremendous variety of farm-fresh products available from southeastern Pennsylvania," says Bob Pierson, Queen Village resident and manager of Farm to City farmers' markets in seven Philadelphia communities. "The farmers' markets in Philadelphia sell everything from strawberries, tomatoes and sweet corn, to naturally raised beef, aged cheeses, locally made breads, and mouthwatering BBQ chicken and ribs cooked right at the markets."

By next year, staff members at PASA hope to expand this effort to a growing network of market venues throughout the target region, and to make materials available to individual farmers in southeast Pennsylvania who wish to label their products as locally grown. A similar program may

be launched to promote farm products in southwestern Pennsylvania by next year as well.

"Our aim is to eventually make sure that consumers anywhere in the commonwealth have a reliable method of identifying farm-fresh products grown in their region by farmers who would welcome their customers to the farm" explained Ruth Sullivan, PASA's director of southeast programs.

In fact, the Buy Fresh/Buy Local Campaign in Pennsylvania is part of an even larger, nationwide Buy Local Initiative organized by FoodRoutes Network (FoodRoutes), a nonprofit organization based in Centre County (Millheim) that provides technical support to community-based groups working to strengthen regional markets for locally grown foods. FoodRoutes provides communications tools, networking opportunities, and information resources to organizations working to rebuild local food systems across the country.

"People everywhere are attracted to this issue regardless of whether they seek out local food for reasons of personal health, support for family farmers, concern for the environment, to strengthen their local economy, or simply because local food tastes better. Food has the power to unite and reconnect people in a way that gives this movement unique potential" said Joani Walsh, program coordinator for FoodRoutes.

A party to celebrate the launch of the southeastern Pennsylvania Buy Fresh/Buy Local campaign was held June 15, Father's Day, at Yard's Brewing Company in Philadelphia and was attended by 130 local food enthusiasts. Fare for the day included a



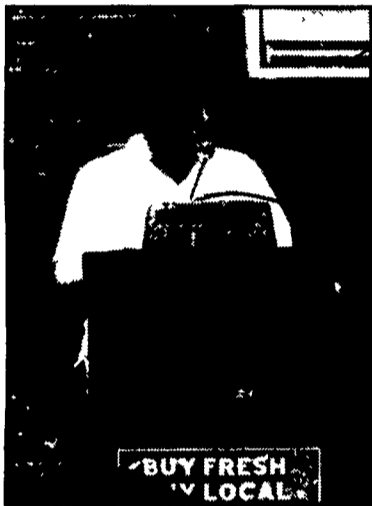
These two fans of local food seem to express concern for where their next meal is coming from.

roasted pig from Country Time Pork in Berks County, as well as a variety of other foods, including zucchini and eggs from Green Meadow farm, cheese from Farm Fresh for Chefs (both Lancaster County), and a variety of breads and beverages produced in the southwest region.

A featured speaker attending the event was Cheryl Cook, recently appointed deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), who brought greetings from Secretary Dennis Wolff. Cook made clear

the department's intention to support the promotion of Pennsylvania-grown products on a local basis as a priority in the future. Cook explained PDA's plans to implement a "Pennsylvania Preferred" label that can be used in a complimentary way with other marketing materials more locally based.

With the Buy Fresh/Buy Local campaign, a new era of mutual appreciation and benefit between Pennsylvania family farmers and consumers may indeed have begun.



Cheryl Cook, deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, addresses the gathering of local food enthusiasts.

# Cooperative Extension Gears Up To Assist In Homeland Security

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension is gearing up to assist in the state's homeland security system.

"Cooperative extension is uniquely positioned to respond to emergencies," says David Filson, director of Penn State Cooperative Extension's South Central Region. Filson recently accepted additional duties coordinating the organization's statewide emergency response efforts.

"We have a network of educators around the state, with an office in every county," Filson says. "We also have a communications system — including a statewide computer network and satellite downlink facilities in nearly every county — that gives us the capacity to send and receive information very quickly. But with the added threat of terrorist attacks against our farms, food system and water supplies, we felt the need to enhance our emer-

gency preparedness and response capabilities," he says.

As a result, emergency response contacts have been named in every county extension office and in each of extension's eight regions.

A task force of Penn State faculty and extension specialists also has been assembled to lend expertise in response to a wide variety of potential emergencies.

"Extension is a key partner in local and statewide emergency planning," Filson says. "In the event of a natural or manmade emergency, the county emergency management office would set the wheels in motion."

Relevant state and federal agencies — such as the Pennsylvania and U.S. agriculture departments, the state health department, state emergency management agency, state department of environmental protection, and others — would be contacted.

If the emergency involves an attack or other event that affects the food system, for instance, cooperative extension would be called in quickly to provide information and assist with communication.

"Depending on the need, that information and expertise can cover a range of agricultural and consumer issues, including farm biosecurity, plant and animal

health, risk management, food safety and human health, and family and household management," he adds.

Penn State Cooperative Extension also offers a wealth of publications, fact sheets and Web sites that cover a wide variety of emergency-related topics.

In addition, resources are shared and distributed nationwide through the Extension Dis-

aster Education Network, with extension systems at most land-grant universities participating.

Meanwhile, Filson will be overseeing disaster-related training and coordination for Penn State Cooperative Extension so that staff throughout the organization understand their roles and are ready to respond if and when they are needed.

# Big Y Launches Certified Hereford Beef

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Big Y has announced that they are now the exclusive New England retailer for Certified Hereford Beef steaks and roasts that are cut fresh daily in each store. Big Y World Class Markets will carry over 85 cuts of Certified Hereford Beef such as tenderloins, sirloins, rib eyes, and london broils.

"We pride ourselves in offering our shoppers the very best possible products, and are excited to intro-

duce our new line of Big Y Certified Hereford Beef," said Scott Ruth, Big Y Vice President of Meat and Specialty Departments. "We're confident our customers will agree this is the most flavorful, juicy, tender beef they've ever tasted."

The only major American-owned and largest family-owned and operated supermarket in the region, Big Y employs over 8,300 people in its 50 locations throughout central and western Massachusetts and Connecticut.

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