

# Identifying Challenges and Creating Capacity in Place-based Food Systems

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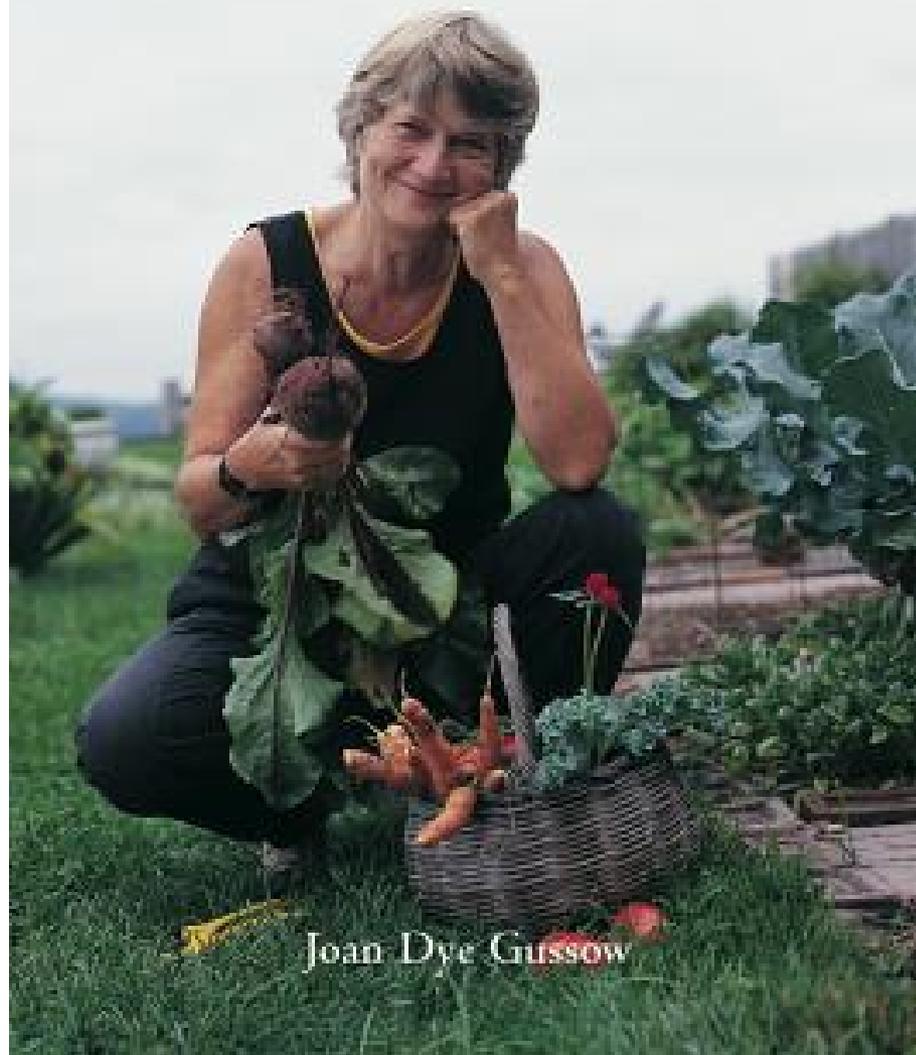
Gail Feenstra, Deputy Director, SAREP  
UC Agriculture and Natural Resources



*"The most important book I've read in a long while."* —BARBARA KATZCOFFER

# This Organic Life

*Confessions of a Suburban Homesteader*



Joan Dye Gussow



# Overview

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- Context: Meaning and importance of a place-based food system
- Challenges of food system infrastructure
- Framework for considering these issues
- Potential solutions: stories from the field
- Progress in making changes to date
- Where to focus next?



# What do we mean by a place-based food system?

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- “Food systems that respond to the needs of and nurture the development of communities within the regions they serve” (KPU)
- “Food from somewhere” (Lev)



# Components of a place-based food system

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- Deeply connected to the environment and to caring for it
- Trusting relationships within supply chains
- Community food security and food sovereignty are goals and rights
- Health of individuals and communities is paramount
- Structures and infrastructures support healthy, place-based food systems
- All members/ stakeholders in the food system participate meaningfully in its development and maintenance



# Food System Values

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- Social, environmental, economic justice
- Democratic participation
- Balance
- Respect



**RAFT Regional Map of  
North America's  
Place-based  
Food Traditions**



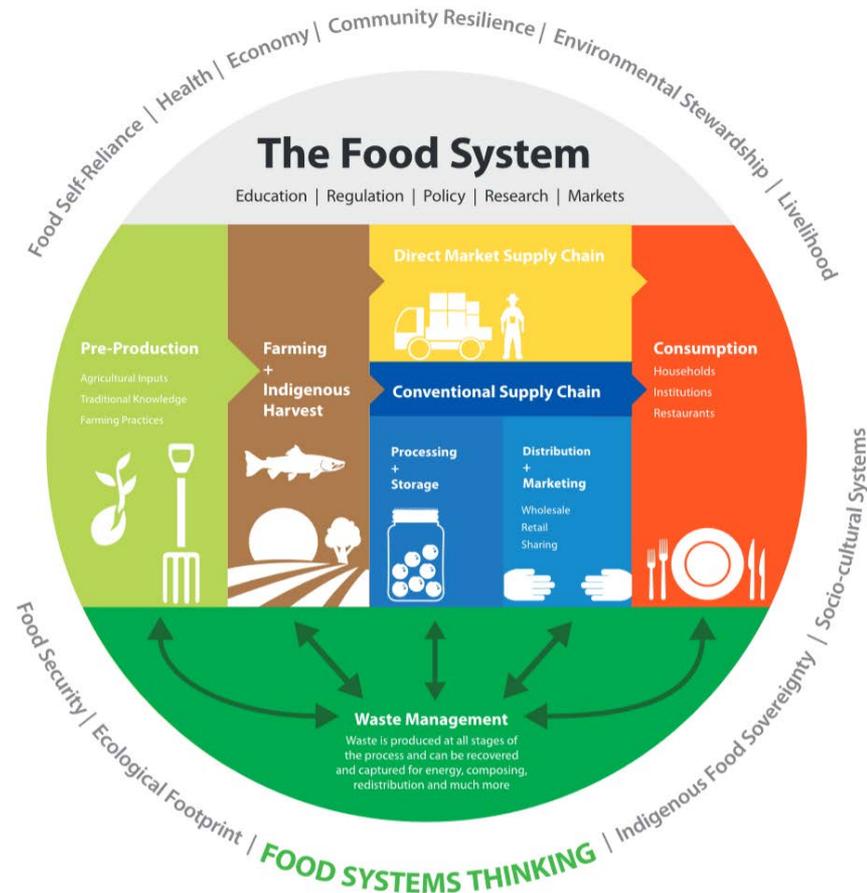
# Industrial Food System

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# Food system infrastructure

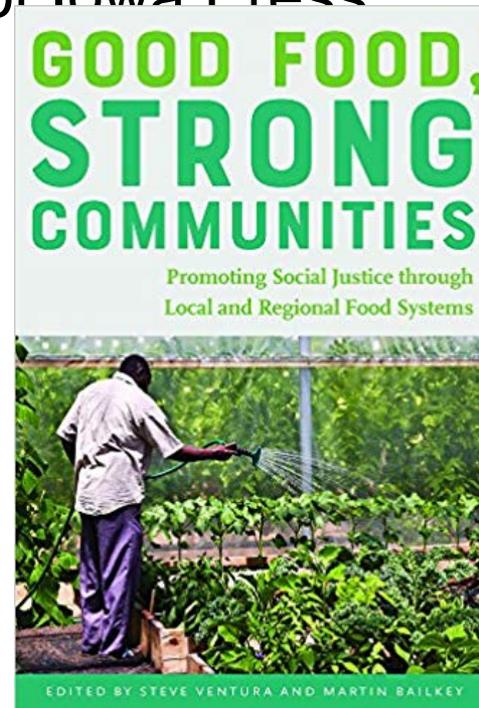
- Supply chain structures
- Communications/ relationships



# Food system infrastructure/ distribution challenges

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Day Farnsworth, L. (2017). Distribution: Supplying Good Food to Cities. In Ventura, S., & Bailkey, M. *Good food, strong communities: Promoting social justice through local and regional food systems*. Iowa City, IA, University of Iowa Press



# Food system infrastructure/ distribution challenges

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## Dominant Food System

- Environmental impacts > climate change
- Social impacts > disparities in food access, labor
- Disappearing mid-scale farms and rural communities



# Challenges for Ag of the Middle

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- Finding appropriate value chain partners, transparency
- Determining effective strategies for differentiating products
- Product pricing based on true costs
- Acquiring adequate capitalization
- Developing effective quality control, logistics
- Developing economic power for value chain negotiations

Stevenson, G. W., Clancy, K., King, R., Lev, L., Ostrom, M., & Smith, S. (2011). Midscale food value chains: An introduction. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 1(4), 27–34 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2011.014.007>.

**Figure 6-1 Barriers to market access and healthy food access in food supply**



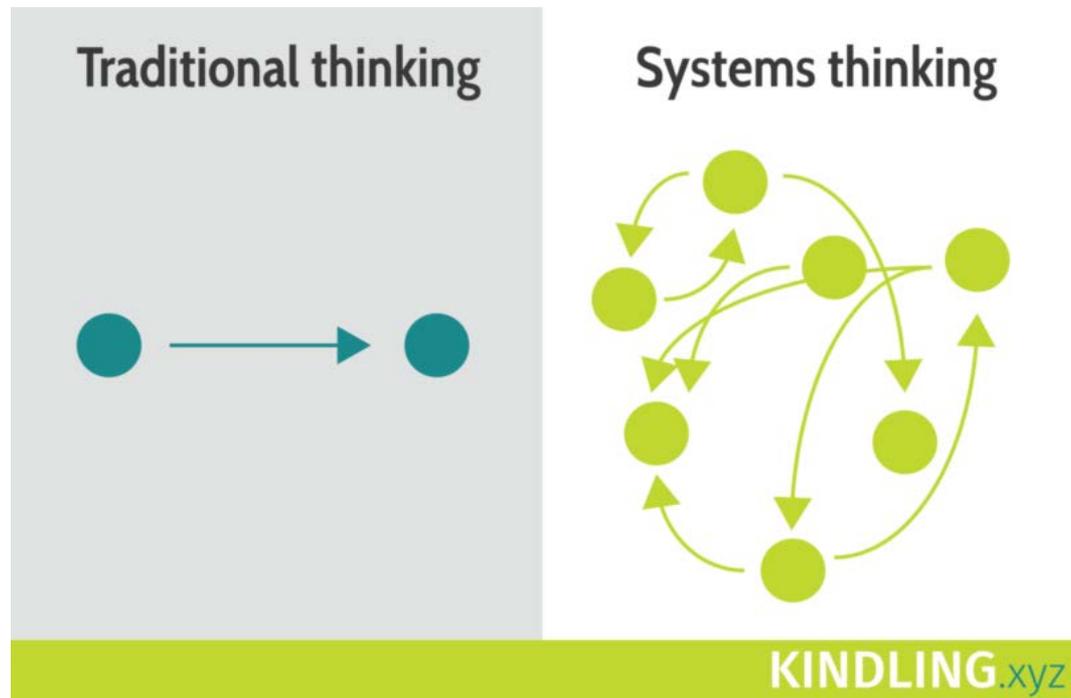
Can we build supply chains that address both types of access issues?

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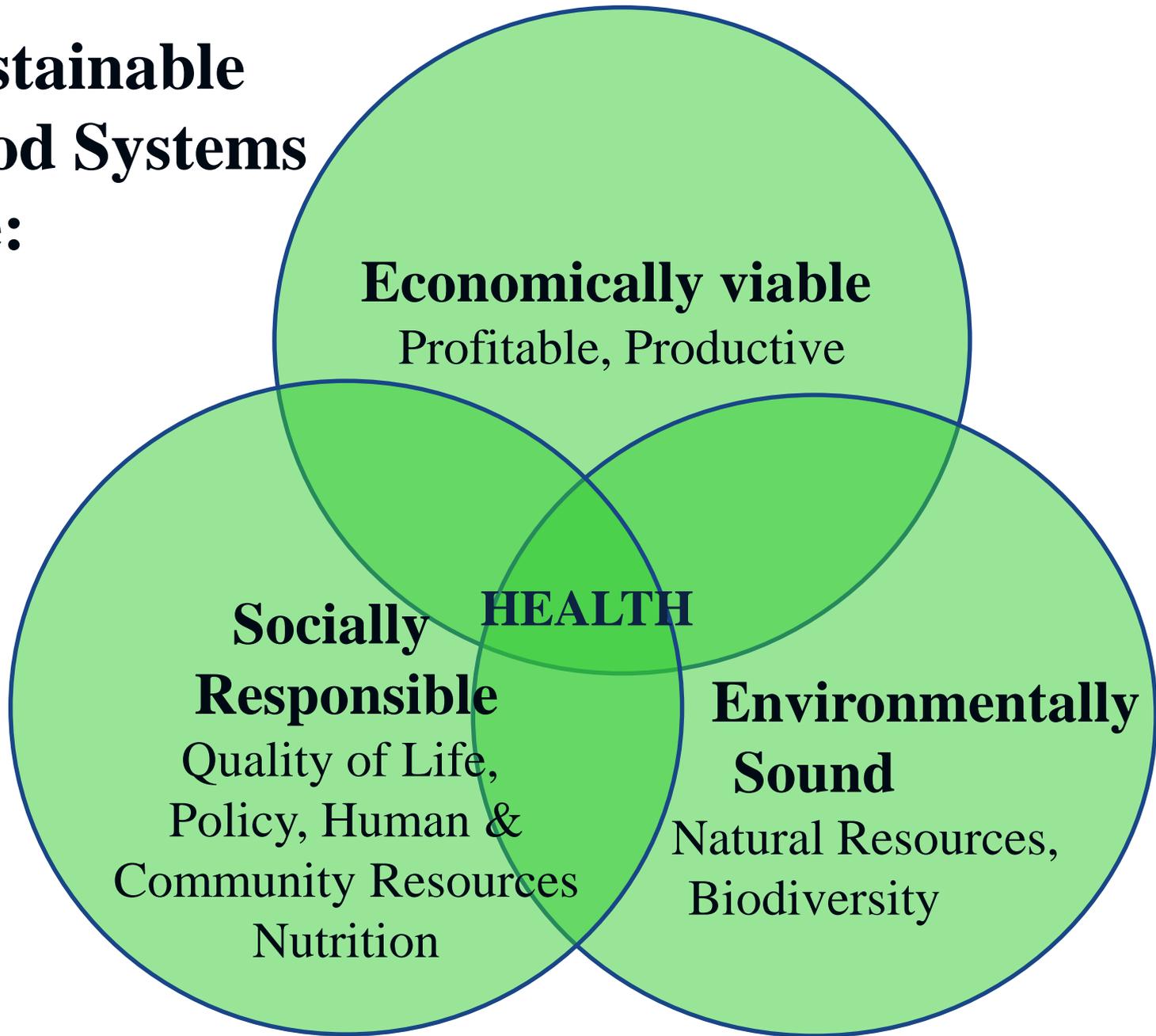
# How to get from here to there?

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- Siloed thinking TO Systems thinking
- Single issues TO Multi-issues
- Individual TO Community



**Sustainable  
Food Systems  
are:**

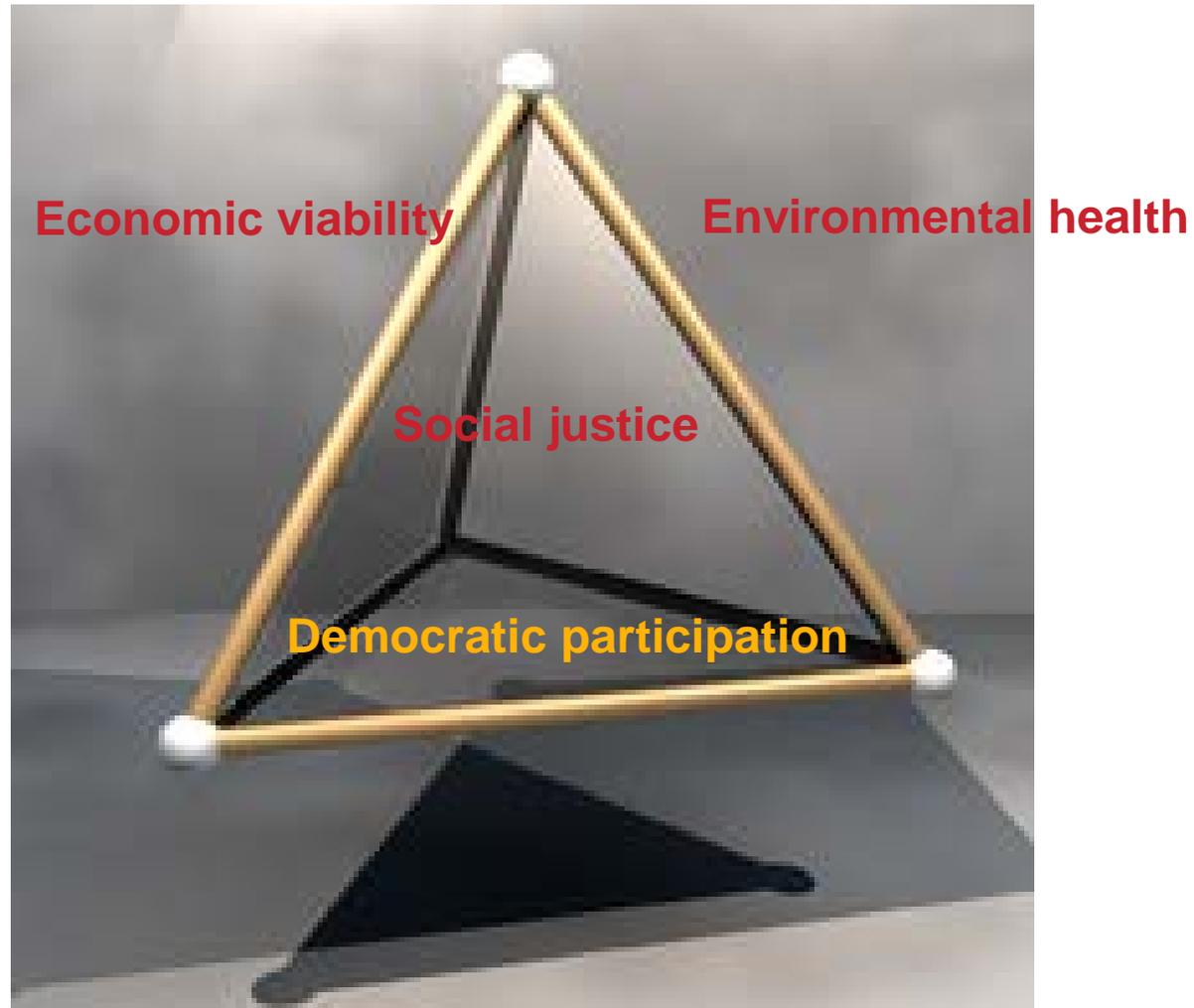


# Frameworks

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- **Sustainable agriculture: three-legged stool**
  - Environmentally sound, economically viable, socially just
- **Industrial marketing**
  - Triple bottom line
- **Supply chain management**
  - Triple bottom line
  - Strategy, risk management, transparency, org culture
- **International development**
  - Social, economic and environmental sustainability
  - Institutional sustainability: transparent, consistent governance, develop community capacity

# Facets of sustainable food system infrastructure



# What does sustainable distribution look like?

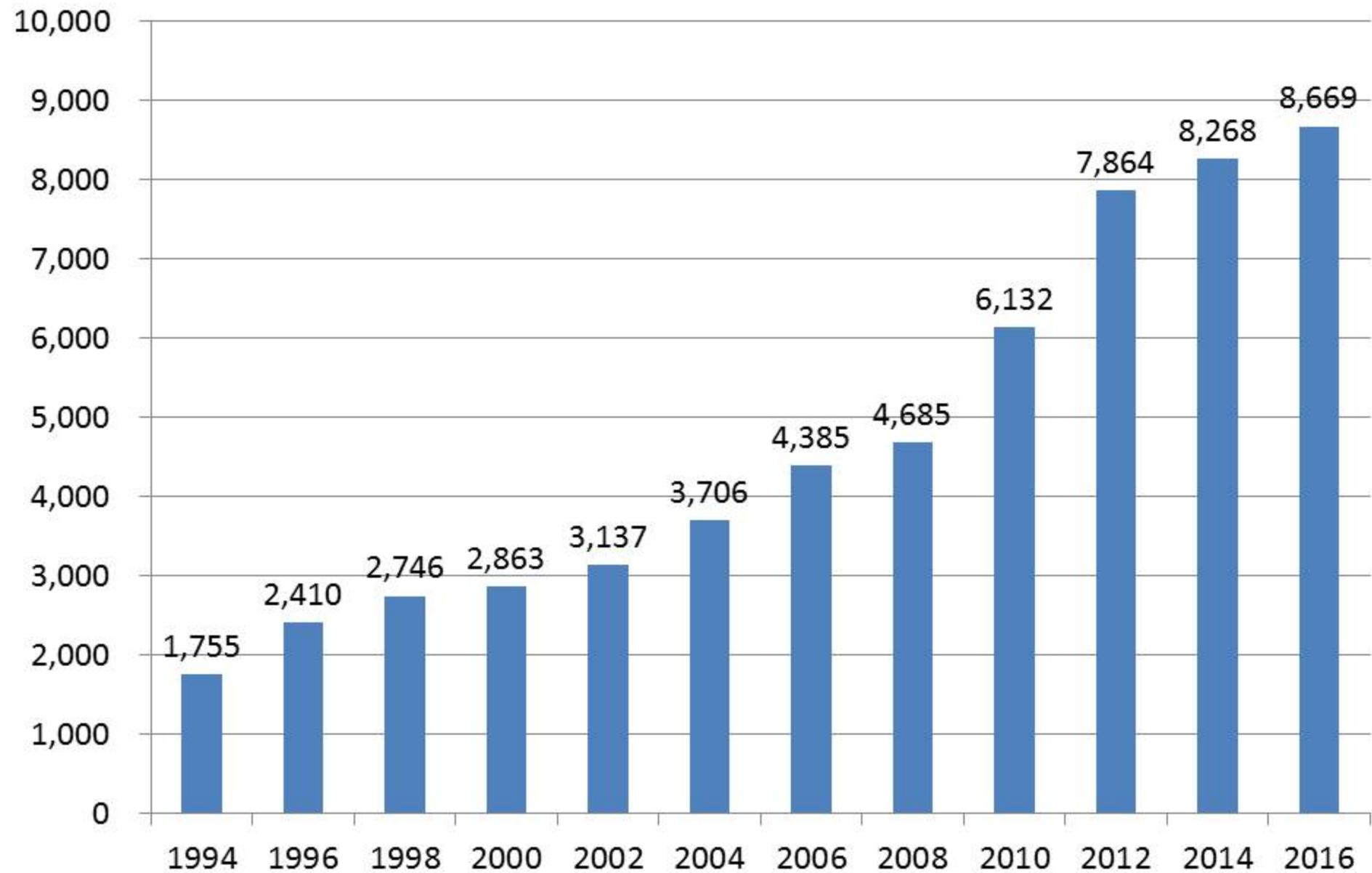
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Changes over time...

- Direct markets: farmers markets, roadside stands



## U.S. Farmers Market Growth



Source of Statistics – USDA

# What does sustainable distribution look like?

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Changes over time...

- Direct markets: farmers markets, roadside stands, CSAs



# What does sustainable distribution look like?

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Changes over time...

- “Agriculture of the Middle”
- Values-based supply chains



# What does sustainable distribution look like?

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Changes over time...

- Hybrid supply chains
- Intermediated marketing channels
  - \$2.7B (2008) > \$3.3B (2012)



# Two Models

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- **Farm to School (Oakland Unified)**



- **Food hubs (Mandela Foods Distribution)**



# Farm to School/ Institution

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- **Local/regional food procurement**
- School gardens/ Farm tours
- Nutrition education
- Recycling/ composting



# Oakland Unified School District Farm to School

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# Oakland Unified: Teaching kids to cook from scratch

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# Oakland Unified: Reducing food waste

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Oakland Eats

GARDEN

FRESH!



# Food Hubs



# Food Hub Survey - 2017

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- Creating new jobs (1,900 paid staff)
- Sourcing from 78 different producers, suppliers
  - Half of producers are beginning farmers/businesses
  - 89% source mostly from small and mid-sized farms
- Two-thirds are breaking even

**Challenge:** balancing supply and demand



# California Food Hub Network

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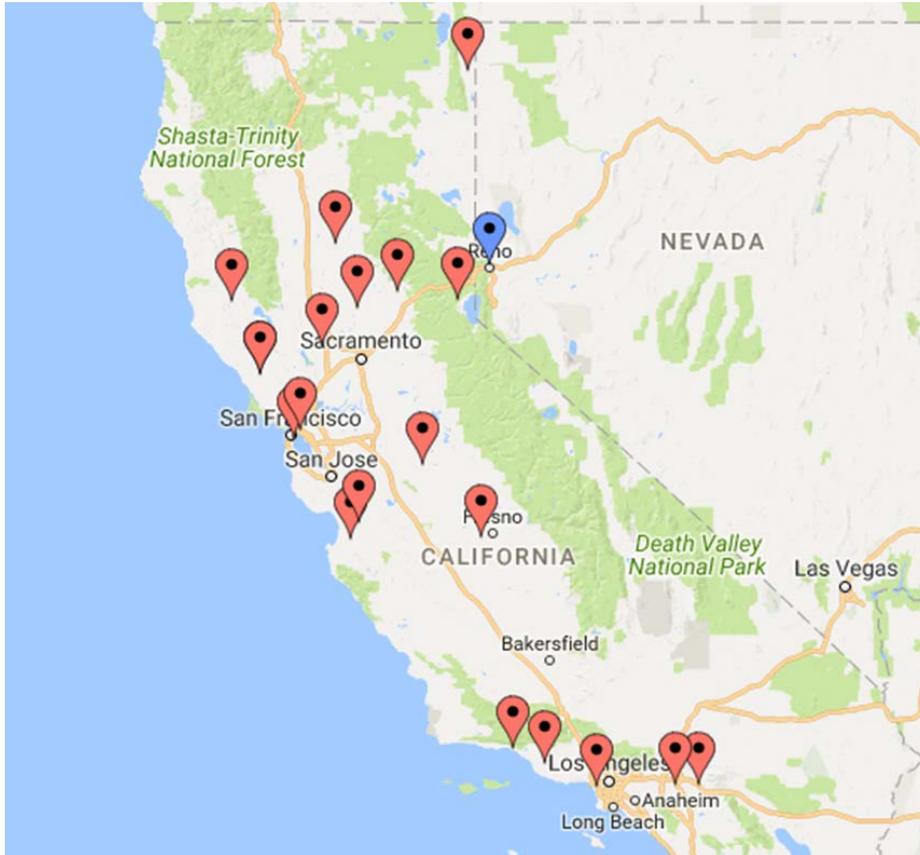
## Background

**CA Food Hub Network was started in fall of 2015** with the goal of “convening a shared learning network that provides technical assistance and guides regional planning”.

Started as a year-long pilot project with **7 food hubs**.  
**Now, 20 (CA) + 1 (NV)**

# California Food Hub Network

## Location of food hubs in the network



Food hubs are a mix of non-profits and for profits.

Range in number of years in operation from < 1 year to 43 years (survey median = 9 yrs)

# California Food Hub Network

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## Objectives of the CA Food Hub Network

- Formalize a CA food hub network
- Increase campus purchasing of local food via food hubs
- Increase sales of specialty crops in California via food hubs

# California Food Hub Network

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## Network Activities

- Annual Convenings (TA + networking + tours of hubs)
  - Monthly webinar calls
  - Communication tools (list-serv in progress)
- Formalize a CA food hub network**
- Interviewing campus buyers
  - Food Hub-Institutional Buyer mixer
  - Student engagement around campus sourcing
- Campus purchasing of local foods via food hubs**
- Annual Food Hub Assessment Survey
  - FSMA compliance trainings for farmers
- Sales of specialty crops in CA via food hubs**

# California Food Hub Network

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So... what is our Network model?

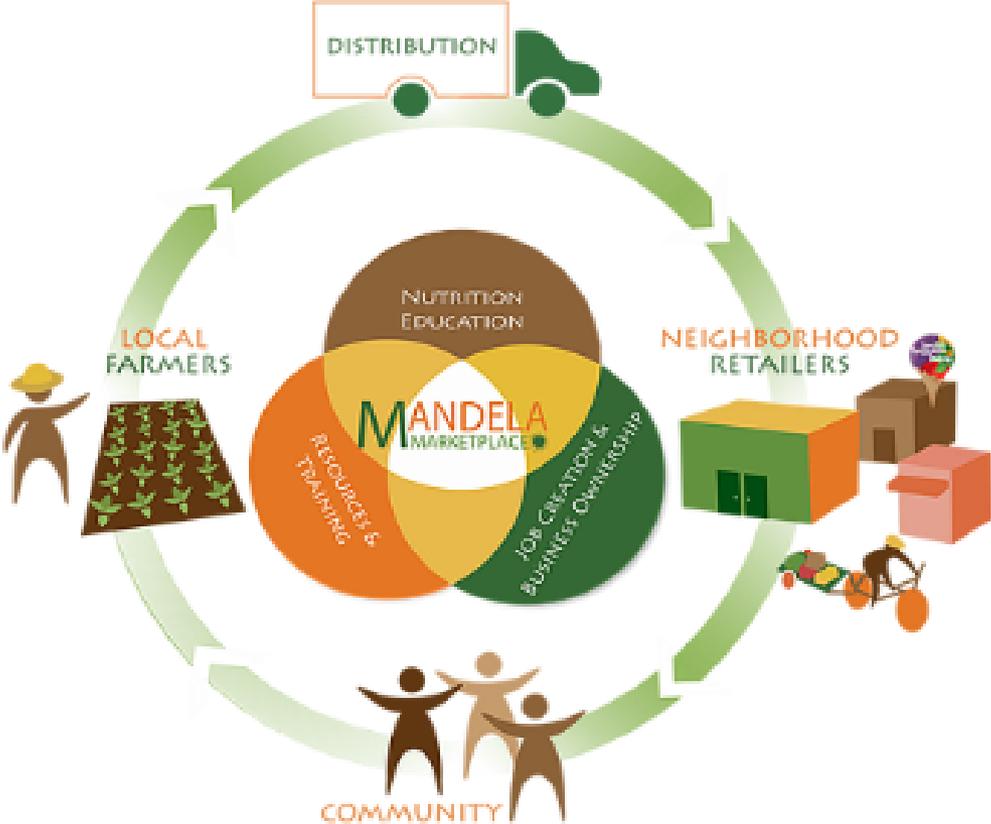
TA model  
- Hubs learning together

Collaborative model  
- Hubs working together





# Mandela Marketplace Approach





# Zella's Soulful Kitchen



# Observations

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- Change takes time; work together
- Diversity is needed
- Be mindful of power dynamics



# Where do we concentrate our efforts?

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- Include and give voice to people of color, disadvantaged groups
- Develop the next generation of leaders
- Ramp up networking, communication, outreach, organizing



# Thank You!

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