



Summary

Introduction



Horses in Douglass, PA | Source: Montgomery County Planning Commission

Eat Local Montco: Montgomery County's Local Food Promotion Strategy seeks to strengthen county farms, bolster the health and quality of life of county residents, and implement the county's comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, by promoting local food to county residents, institutions, and businesses. It analyzes the county's current agricultural and food system resources, acknowledging the challenges of local food production, distribution, and marketing, while at the same time making recommendations to strengthen local farms by linking local producers with local buyers, consumers, restaurants, and institutions.

Ag in Montco Key Takeaways

- 1 Most of Montgomery County's Farms are Small Family Farms
- 2 Montgomery County is Losing Farms and Farmland
- 3 Nursery, Greenhouse, and Floriculture Products are Montgomery County's Top Agricultural Commodities
- 4 Over 25 Percent of Montgomery County Farms Raise Bees, Horses, or Rabbits
- 5 Over Half of Montgomery County Farmers Consider Farming to Be Their Primary Occupation
- 6 Montgomery County Farmers Aren't Making a Lot of Money From Their Farms

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Montgomery County Farms, In Aggregate, Are Losing Money

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Direct Sales Are a Very Small Part of Overall Farm Sales

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Agritourism and Recreational Services Are the Fastest Growing Sources of Income

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30 Percent of Agricultural Lands Are Permanently Preserved

Recommendations



Encourage Local Food Procurement

Governments can show their commitment to the local food system by ensuring that a portion of the money they spend on food is spent on locally-grown or -produced food. They can do this by ***developing a targeted percentage of local food purchases, issuing a resolution in support of local purchasing, and changing county departmental procedures.***

Support Local Nurseries That Grow Native Plants

The County can support farms growing nursery crops by helping to create a demand for locally-grown, native plants. The County can develop a model native vegetation landscaping ordinance for municipalities that requires the use of native plant species, as well as use locally-grown native plants for its own landscaping needs.

Create a County Food Policy Council

Food policy councils are formed to encourage collaboration and coordinate work among local food system stakeholders. A Montgomery County food policy council could work to improve access to healthful food and make it easier for farms and other food ventures to do business in the county. It could coordinate existing efforts by different organizations and undertake new initiatives, including implementing recommendations made by *Eat Local Montco*.

Above Photo: Local Food at Fair Food Farmstand | Source: Flickr User Harry Hunt



COORDINATE SUPPLY CHAIN EFFORTS

Convene Food System Stakeholders

The County, in collaboration with local food system partners, could convene a series of meet and greet events to help initiate and facilitate better connections between different local food system stakeholders like growers, buyers, local food distributors, and farmers' market managers.

Support Farm to Institution within Montgomery County

Montgomery County is home to many university and health care systems that serve hundreds, if not thousands, of diners every day. Given their large purchasing volume, institutions can make a significant impact on the local food economy by committing to sourcing from local farms. The County can encourage institutions to **support local food sourcing through catering, institute an employee CSA or farmers' market**, and **encourage institutions to participate in a Buy Local Week or other local food event**.

Above Photo: Lansdale Farmers' Market | Source: Montgomery County Planning Commission



TAP INTO THE GROWING CRAFT BEER SCENE

Draw on Fair Food's Grain Value Chain Efforts

With USDA FoodLINC funding, Fair Food Philadelphia is working to restore the local grain economy by assessing market demand and existing infrastructure for grain storage and processing. Montgomery County should tap into these efforts to ensure that local farmers, brewers, and distillers are connected to this work.

Support Farmers Growing Malting Barley and Hops

Many craft brewers are looking to incorporate locally-sourced ingredients into their beers to both create a unique product and satisfy a demand for local goods. Montgomery County can support its farmers and craft beer industry by conducting a market analysis of malting barley and hop

production in the county. The County could also work with local partners to further agricultural research on growing malting barley and hops in Pennsylvania and provide technical assistance to farmers who grow these crops.

Develop a Montco Local Ale Trail

Tourism trails are a popular way to promote destinations that are thematically linked and geographically clustered. Given the density of craft breweries in Montgomery County, developing a comprehensive guide to Montco breweries would help to promote the County's beer scene.

Above Photo: Forest and Main Brewing Co. in Ambler, PA | Source: Stacey Salter Moore



Build Off of Existing Promotional Programs

Montgomery County should build off of the local food promotion efforts that already exist in the region, including the County's local food guide, *Direct from the Farm*, PA Preferred, and Buy Fresh Buy Local®.

Buy Local Challenge/Buy Local Week

Buy Local campaigns are one way that governments and residents can support a strong local economy. There are a number of ways to implement a Buy Local campaign, including a Buy Local Week Challenge, where residents commit to eating at least one item from a local farm every day for one week. Other challenges ask consumers to buy a certain percentage of food from local sources throughout the growing season.

Implement a Montco Food Bucks Program

A Montco Food Bucks program could provide shoppers with a coupon to purchase food produced in Montgomery County. The program could be targeted to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program recipients as a means of increasing their buying power, or it could be directed toward all county residents to emphasize the importance of local dollars staying in the local economy.

Recognize Local Food System Partners

Montgomery County could create an annual award to recognize partners who are making a positive impact on the local food system. A Local Food System Award would not only highlight the important work being done to advance Montgomery County's food system, but would also bring greater attention to food system resources.

Above Photo: Philly Food Bucks | Source: Dave Tavani, The Food Trust



Promote Model Sign Ordinances

In order to allow farms to safely advertise their businesses, while still maintaining community character, the County should work with municipalities to adopt sign ordinances that follow the County's Model Sign Ordinance.

Develop Model Agritourism Zoning

To support agritourism enterprises within the county, the Planning Commission should develop model agritourism zoning ordinances and then work with municipalities to adopt their own versions. Agritourism zoning should balance the potential economic benefits of agritourism with potential public health and welfare concerns, such as additional traffic and noise.

Continue to Support Farmland Preservation Efforts

In order to help make farmland affordable to a new generation of farmers, preserve the County's character, and achieve the *Montco 2040* farmland preservation acquisition goal, Montgomery County should continue to provide strong funding and support for farmland preservation.

Above Photo: Living Hope Farm, a preserved farm in Harleysville, PA | Source: Living Hope Farm

Take Action



Don't be afraid to ask where your food comes from, whether it's at school, work, the grocery store, restaurants, or even the hospital. Take the time to show that consumers prefer local food by asking food suppliers to commit to supporting farmers and other food producers in Montgomery County.



The market for local food depends on demand from consumers. Use resources such as Montgomery County's 2017 farmers' markets list or *Direct from the Farm: A Guide to Buying Local in Montco* to find farmstands and farmers' markets that sell local goods. Prioritize eating at restaurants that source from local farms and challenge yourself to set goals for buying (and eating!) local food.



Food systems are complex and many of these recommendations require coordinated effort and leadership. Show your support of Montgomery County's local food economy by talking with the County Commissioners, their staff, and nonprofit partners. Volunteer to help with local food initiatives and donate to organizations that aim to improve residents' access to healthy, farm-fresh foods.

Abstract

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Abstract: *Eat Local Montco: Montgomery County's Local Food Promotion Strategy* analyzes the county's agricultural resources and provides recommendations for ways the county can support local farmers and food producers.

Read the full report at:

www.dvrpc.org/Products/18006



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