



Agriculture-Fruits and Vegetables Cluster

Co-chairs: Toni Sorenson (GreenStone Farm Services-Sorens-Valhalla Orchards

antonia.sorenson@greenstonefcs.com)

Andy Barta (Rio Creek Feed Mill - agbarta@riocreekfeedmill.com)

Fruits and Vegetables Sub-committee Co-chair: Mary Pat Carlson (Farm Market Kitchen - mcarlson@farmmarketkitchen.com)

Dairy Sub-Committee Co-Chair: Amber Hewett (amber.hewett@charter.net)

PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

LOCAL FOODS GRANTS SUPPORTED BY LICI AGRICULTURE CLUSTER

The Lakeshore Industry Cluster Initiative (LICI)-Agriculture Cluster's Fruits and Vegetables Leadership Team met on April 4 and identified some immediate action steps they feel are important in the support and advancement of local food networks and production in the Lakeshore Region.

Most immediate of these actions, involves comment on the State of Wisconsin budget and the proposed cuts to the budget for the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Grant Program administered through the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection. The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin (BLBW) competitive grant program was launched in 2008 to strengthen Wisconsin's agricultural and food industries. The grants work to reduce the marketing, distribution and processing hurdles that impede the expansion of sales of Wisconsin's food products to local purchasers. The budget allocation of \$200,000 proposed in the initial budget for this program is quite small, in relationship to the other grant and economic development programs that our state budget includes, while the return on investment has proven to be quite high.

Comprehensive Impact to the State

Keeping food dollars in Wisconsin communities supports local businesses, improves farm incomes, and creates jobs. The BLBW grant project recipients have reported on work from July 2008 to December 2011. http://datcp.wi.gov/uploads/Press_Releases/pdf/BLBW2011.pdf Each demonstrates success and positive impact in Wisconsin communities. The impact of the BLBW grants is far-reaching across all Wisconsin counties. Over 1,900 Wisconsin producers have positively benefited from increased sales resulting from the grant funds. As a result of these grants, 51 new jobs have been created across the state, and 50 jobs have been retained. The grant recipients have directly generated over \$4 million in new sales of Wisconsin food products for a return on investment of more than 6 to 1. These dollars went to Wisconsin farmers, cooperatives, processing facilities, and distribution companies. Furthermore, these dollars circulated in their communities and to all of the suppliers and services these groups depend on.

Budget Hearings are taking place now across the state with the following schedule:

Monday, April 8, 2013 [Lambeau Field Legends Club Room – 4th Level, Lambeau Field Atrium 1265 Lombardi Avenue Green Bay, WI 54304](#) 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 10 [Kalahari Resort Suites 2 and 7 \(Main Level\) 1305 Kalahari Drive Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965](#) 10:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Thursday, April 18, 2013 [Baldwin-Woodville High School Auditorium 1000 13th Avenue Baldwin, WI 54002](#) 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

While in-person comment at the public hearings has the most impact, comment may also be made in writing or verbally to your local legislators. However, time is of the essence, as the budget process rapidly moves along towards the final approval following the budget hearings. To submit comment to your legislators' offices you may phone the **Legislative Hotline**: Toll-free: 1-800-362-9472 or submit written comments at: budgetcomments@legis.wisconsin.gov or mail them to JFC Clerk, Room 305 East, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53702.

For additional updates on the Buy Local Buy Wisconsin program as it moves through the budget process, go to: <http://wilocalfood.wordpress.com/2013/03/29/help-save-buy-local-buy-wisconsin-grant-program/>

Another course of action available to contact your legislators and make an impact on the budget and legislative process, is to participate in the Door-Kewaunee Legislative Days on Wednesday May 15-16. The Legislative visits are scheduled for May 15 from 1:30-4:30, and restoring the Buy Local Buy Wisconsin Program funding is one of the selected key issues to be addressed on this year's legislative agenda for the trip to the capitol in Madison. The purpose of Legislative Days is to educate state officials about Door and Kewaunee Counties, and to lobby for state action to help address local issues and concerns. For more information on Door-Kewaunee Legislative Days and to register for the event go to <http://www.dklegislatedays.com/> or visit the event's Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/DKLegislativeDay>. Additional information can also be obtained by contacting [Jennifer Brown](#) (920-487-5233) or [Bill Chaudoir](#) (920-743-3113 x203).

For more information on the Lakeshore Industry Cluster Initiative and how to get involved with the five county (Door, Kewaunee, Calumet, Sheboygan and Manitowoc) go to www.lakeshoreinitiative.webs.com or contact Connie Loden at 920-482-0540.