



# Strengthening Community-Based Food Systems

**Ken Meter**

Crossroads Resource Center  
(Minneapolis)

**Megan Phillips Goldenberg**

New Growth Associates  
(Saline MI)

**MOSES Conference**

La Crosse, Wisconsin

**February 22, 2019**

**Photos © Ken Meter, 1982 - 2017**



## **Overview**

### **Introductions and Overview**

### **Conventional Farming in the US**

### **Organic Markets**

- **Vegetables**
- **Dairy**
- **Grains**

### **Additional Trends, Thoughts, & Stories**

### **Community Foods Across the Country**



**Ken Meter**  
**Crossroads Resource Center**



## **Food System Assessments**

**Part of Organic Growers & Buyers Association  
meetings in 1970s where early standards were set**

**Keynote speaker for MOSES 2007**



**Megan Phillips Goldenberg**  
**Crossroads Resource Center &**  
**New Growth Associates**  
**(Saline, MI)**



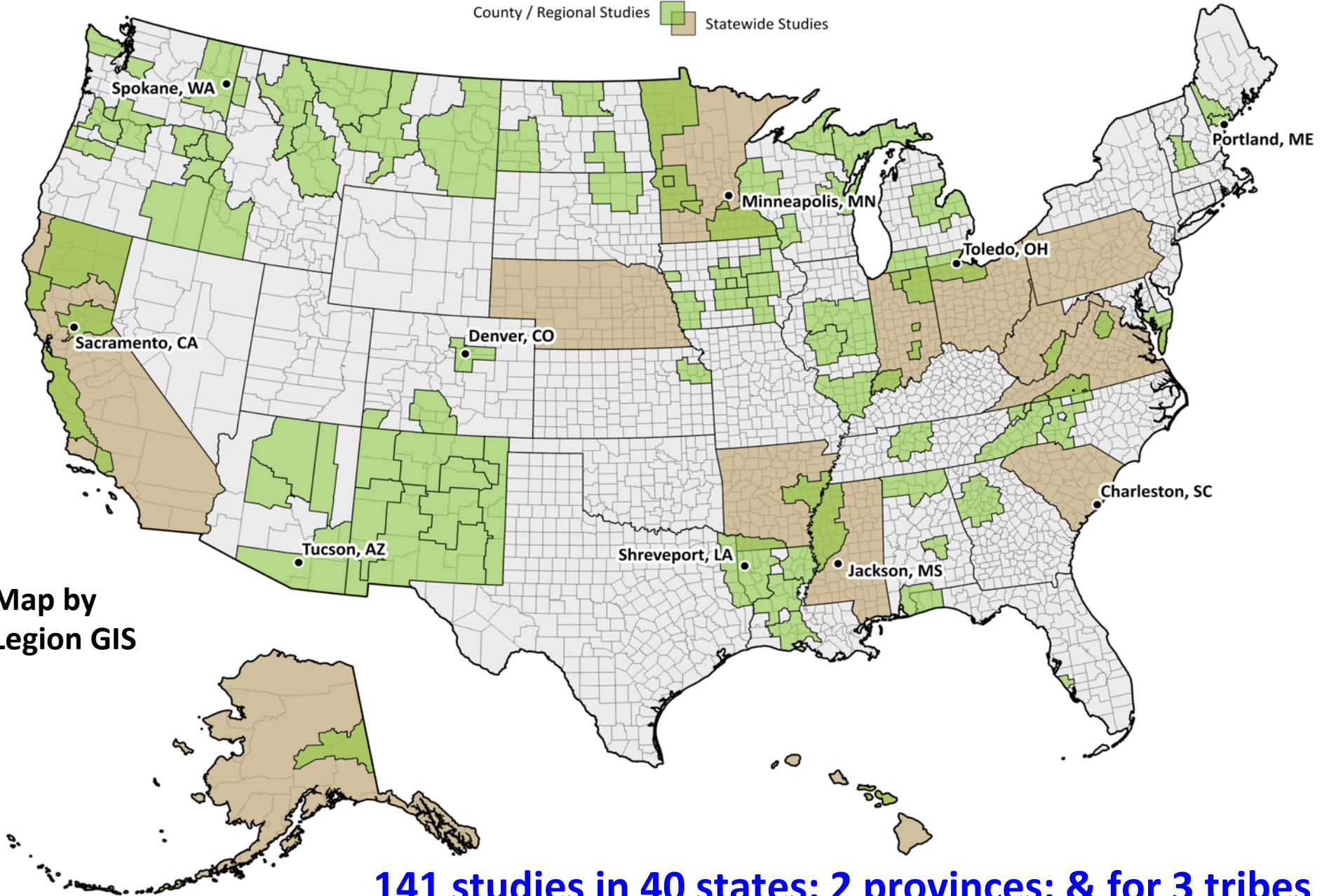
**Agricultural Economist**

**Owner of Macon Creek Malt House**

**Heritage Grain Research Coordinator**

# CRC Farm & Food Economy Studies

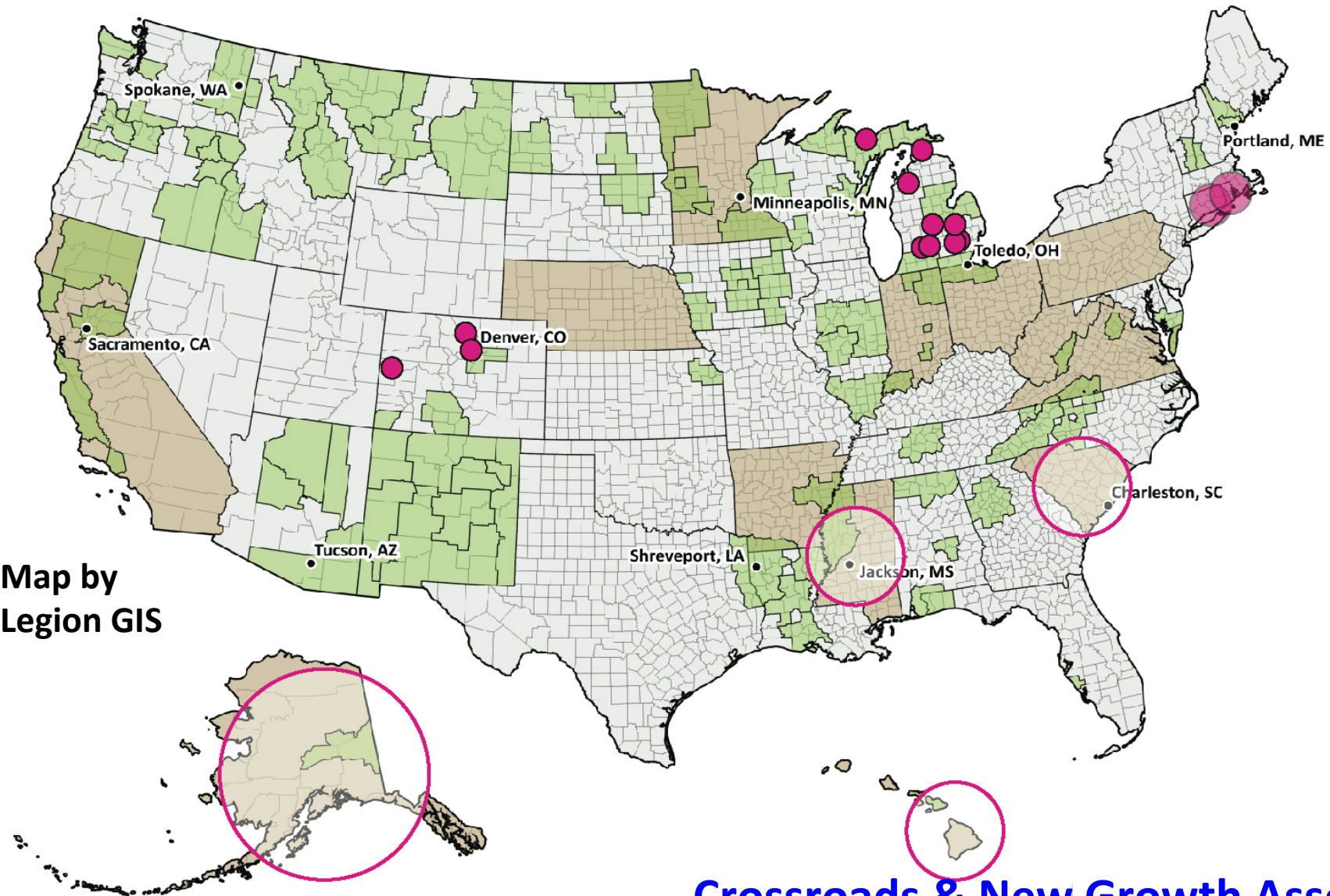
County / Regional Studies  Statewide Studies 



# Food and Farm Studies and Projects



- CRC County/Regional Studies
- CRC Statewide Studies
- New Growth Associates Projects
- New Growth Associates + CRC Collaborations



Map by  
Legion GIS

**Crossroads & New Growth Associates**



# Today's Presentation

Introductions and Overview

**Conventional Farming in the US**

Organic Markets

- Vegetables
- Dairy
- Grains

Additional Trends, Thoughts, & Stories

Community Foods Across the Country



U.S. data

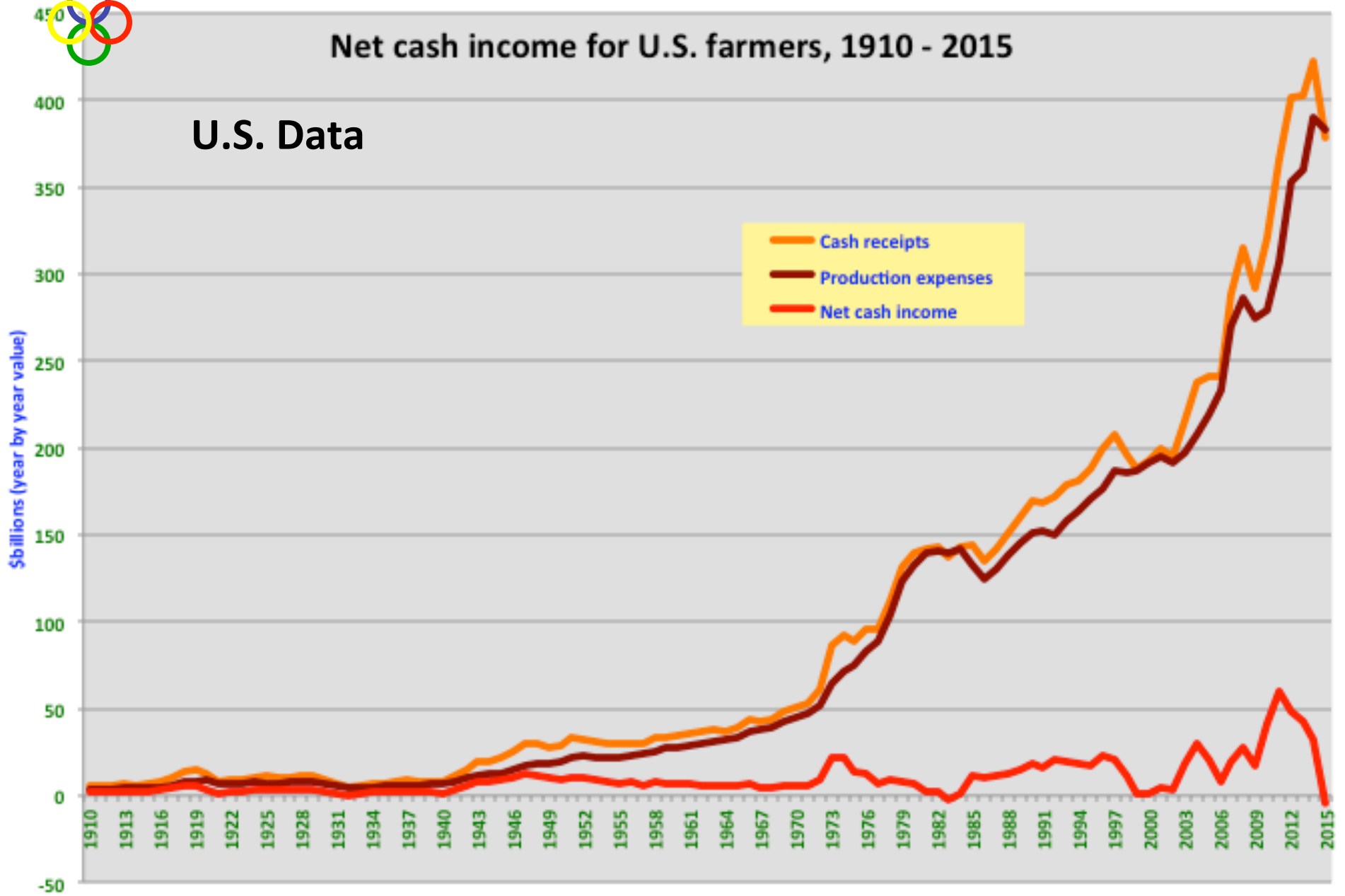






# Net cash income for U.S. farmers, 1910 - 2015

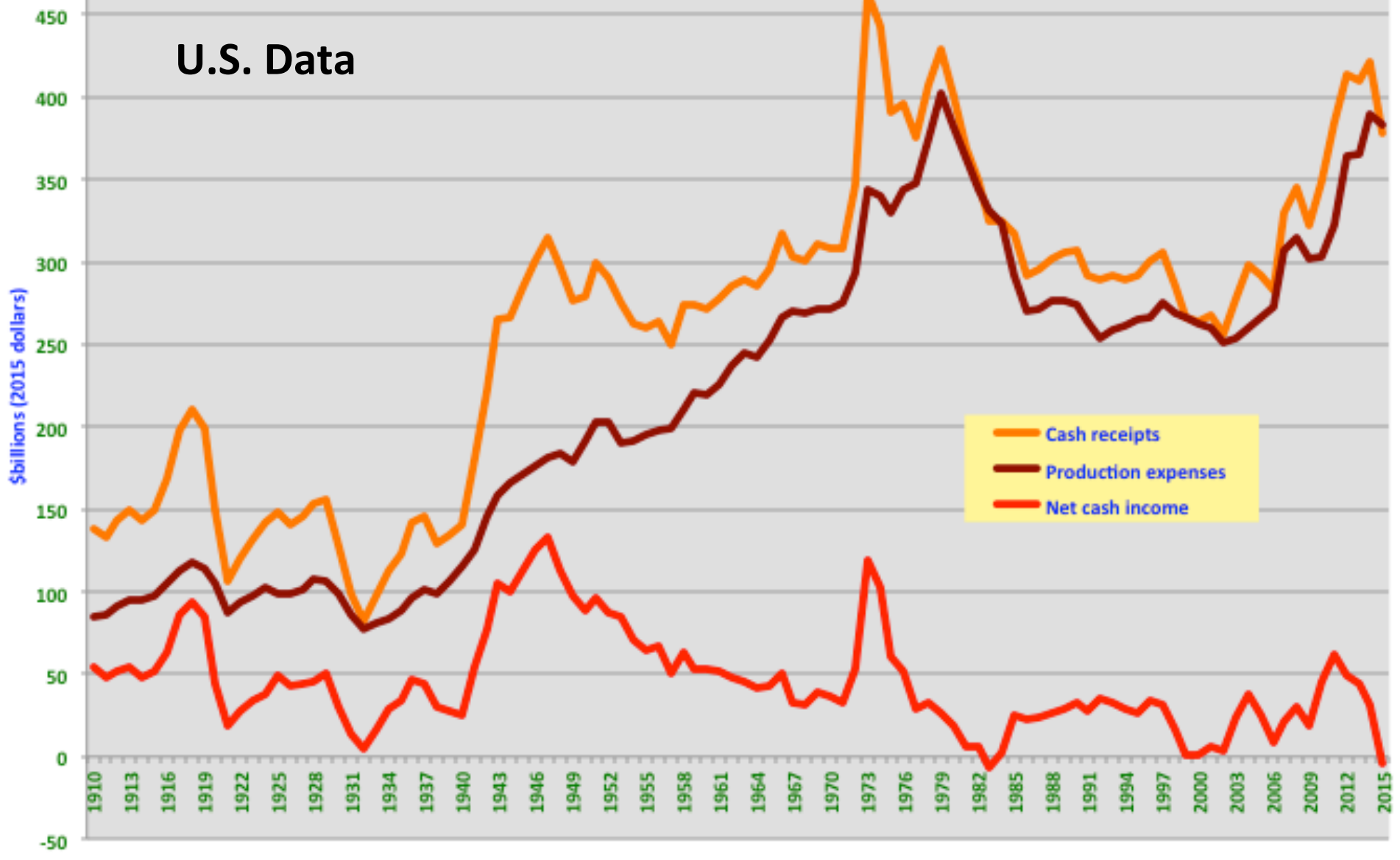
U.S. Data





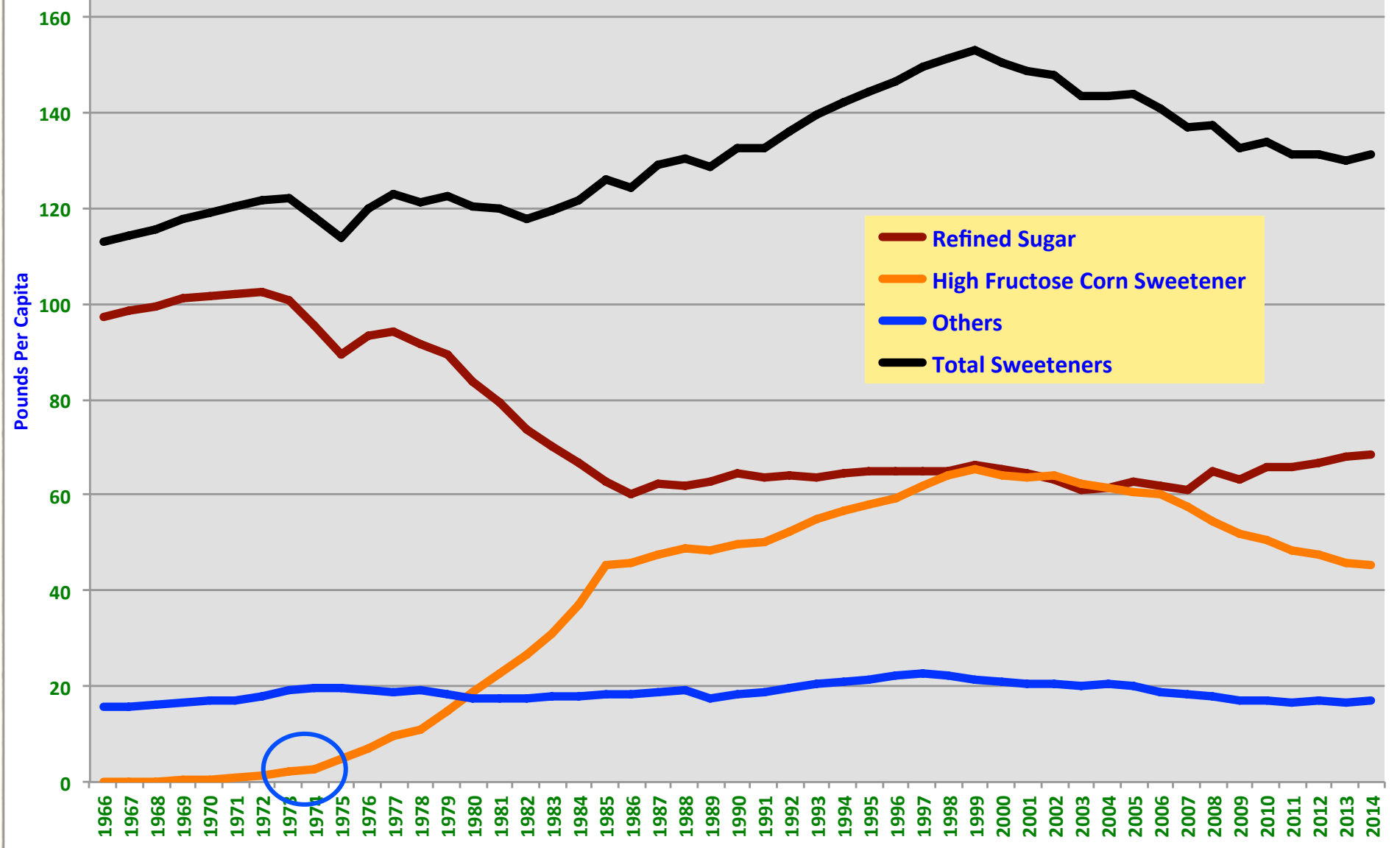
# Adjusted net cash income for U.S. farmers, 1910 - 2015

U.S. Data



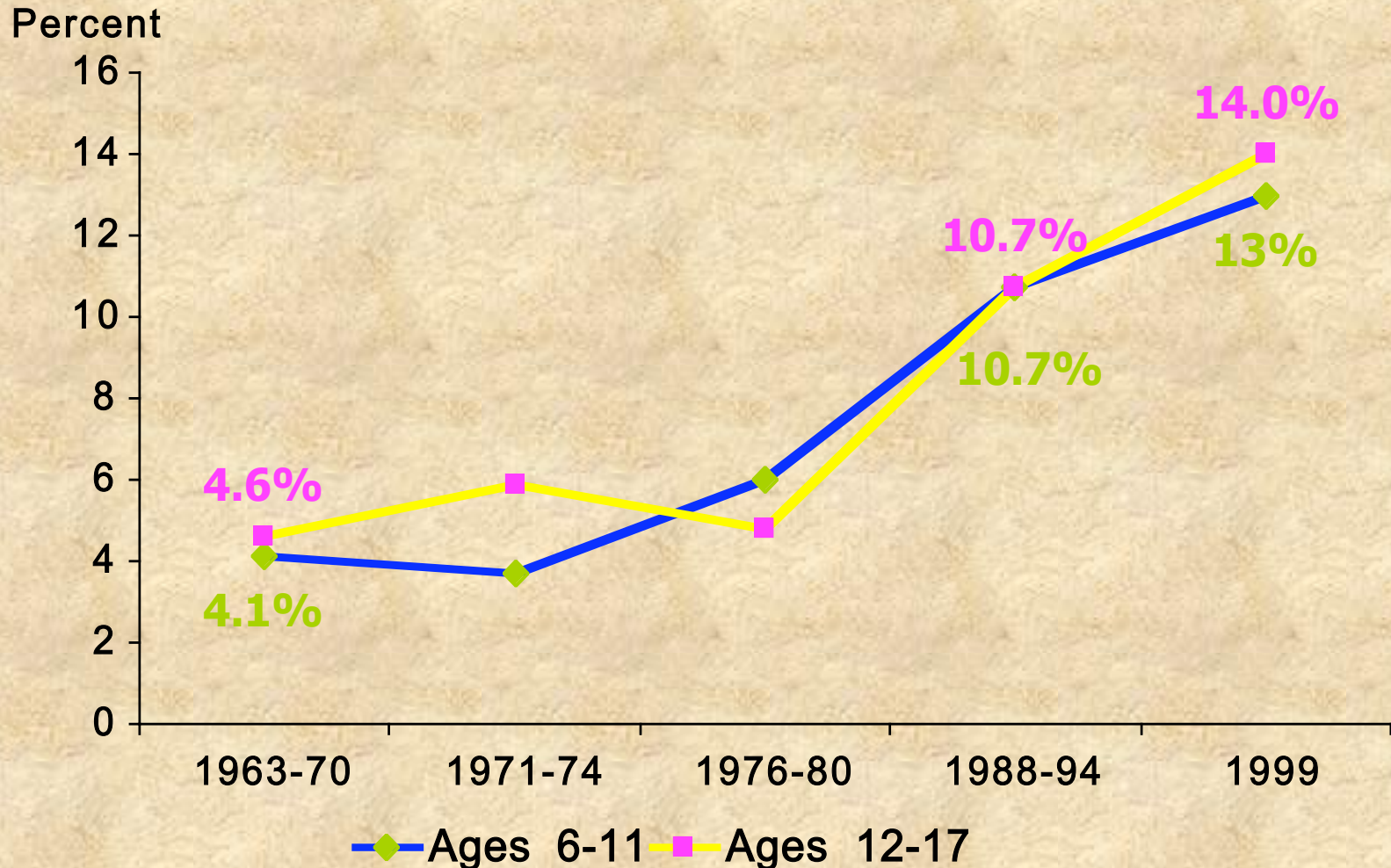


### Sweetener Use in U.S., 1966 - 2014



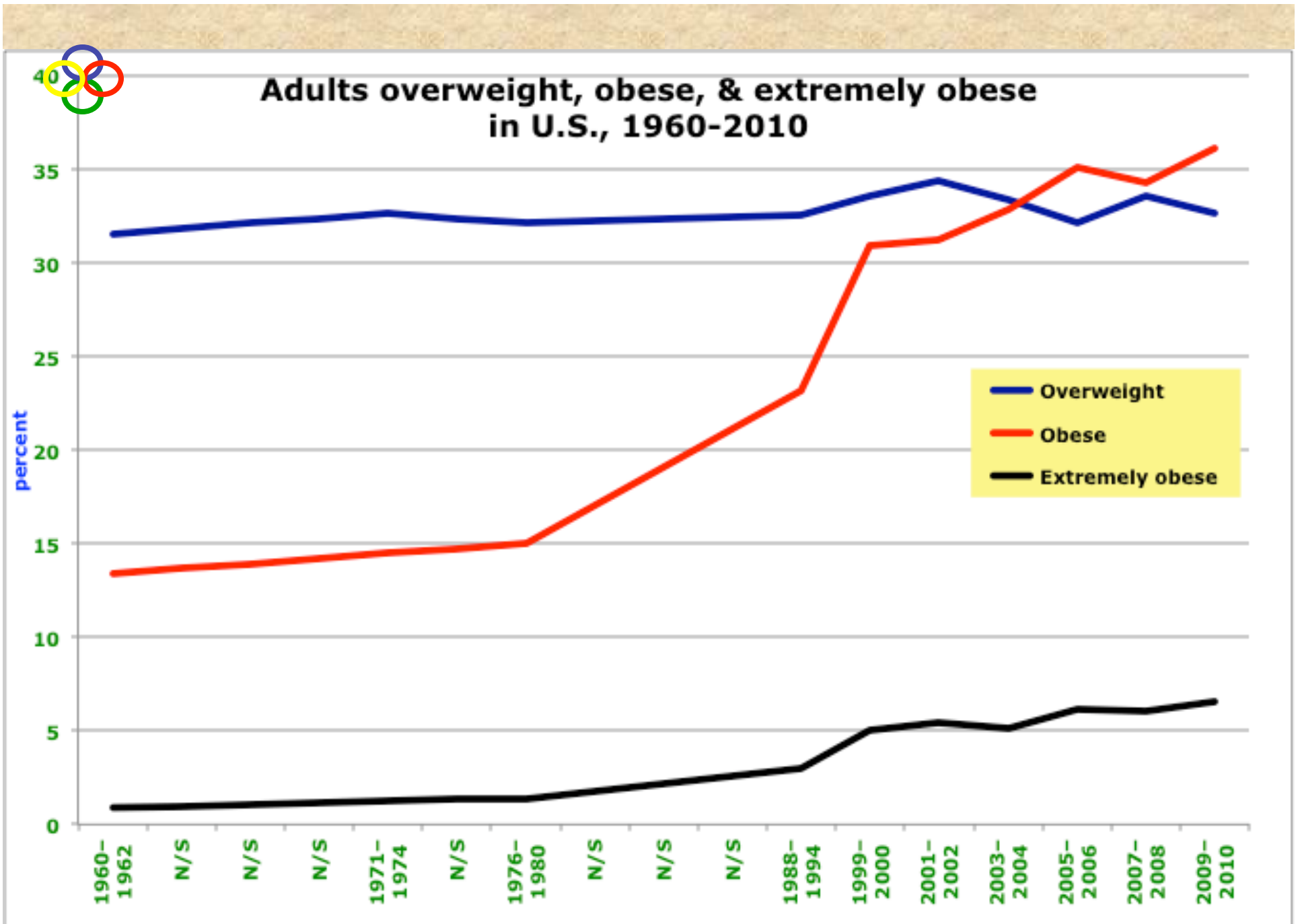


# U.S. Youth Who are Overweight Percent by Age



≥95th percentile for BMI by age and sex, based on NHANES I reference data

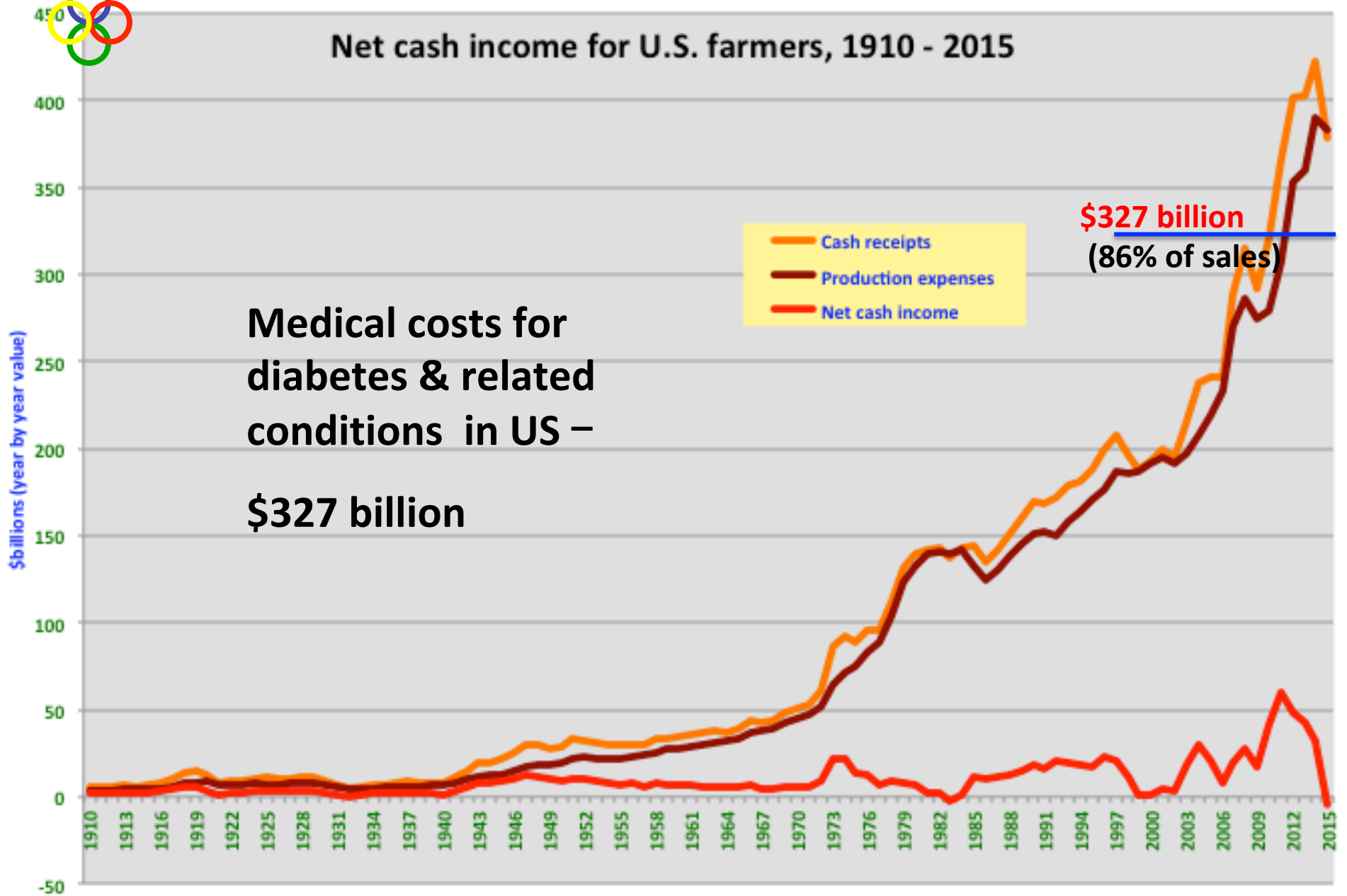
Source: Troiano RP, Flegal KM. Pediatrics 1998;101(3):497-504. NHANES 1999, National Center for Health Statistics. Chart by Melinda Hemmelgarn



Source: NHANES — National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey



## Net cash income for U.S. farmers, 1910 - 2015



Medical costs for diabetes & related conditions in US – \$327 billion



## Decline in Environmentalism

**1991: 78%** of US Adults say they are environmentalists

**37%** “Strong”

**41%** “Somewhat”

**19%** “Misgivings”

**2016: 42%** of US Adults say they are environmentalists

**23%** “Strong”

**19%** “Somewhat”

**57%** “Misgivings”



## Decline in Environmentalism

Yet **59%** of Americans believe the US government is not doing enough to protect the environment

Sentiment is Divided About Who Should Do What

Nabhan recommends *Community-Based Conservation*





# Today's Presentation

Introductions and Overview

Conventional Farming in the US

**Organic Food Sectors**

- **Vegetables**
- **Dairy**
- **Grains**

Additional Trends, Thoughts, & Stories

Community Foods Across the Country



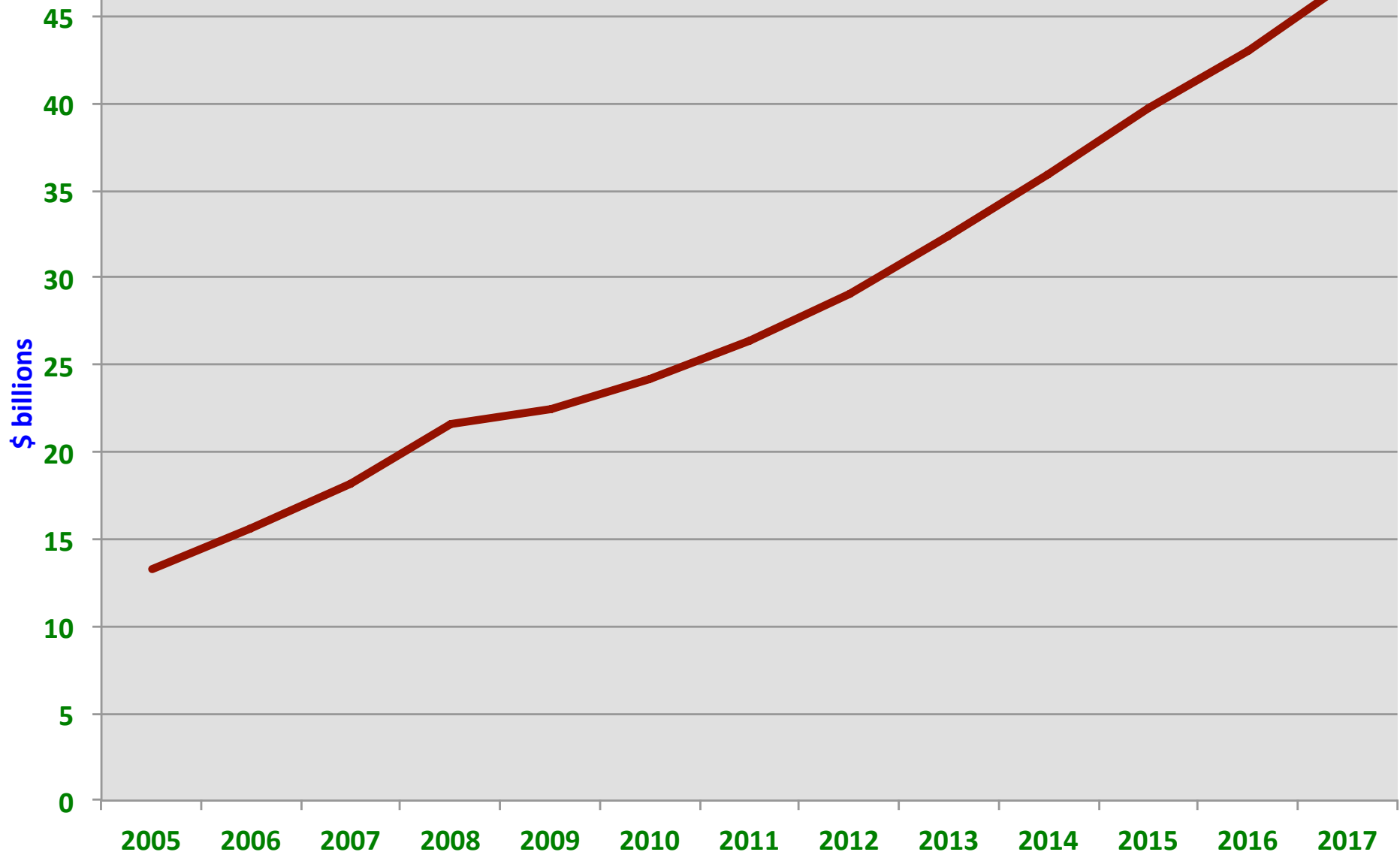
# Organic Food Sectors



Fayetteville, Arkansas

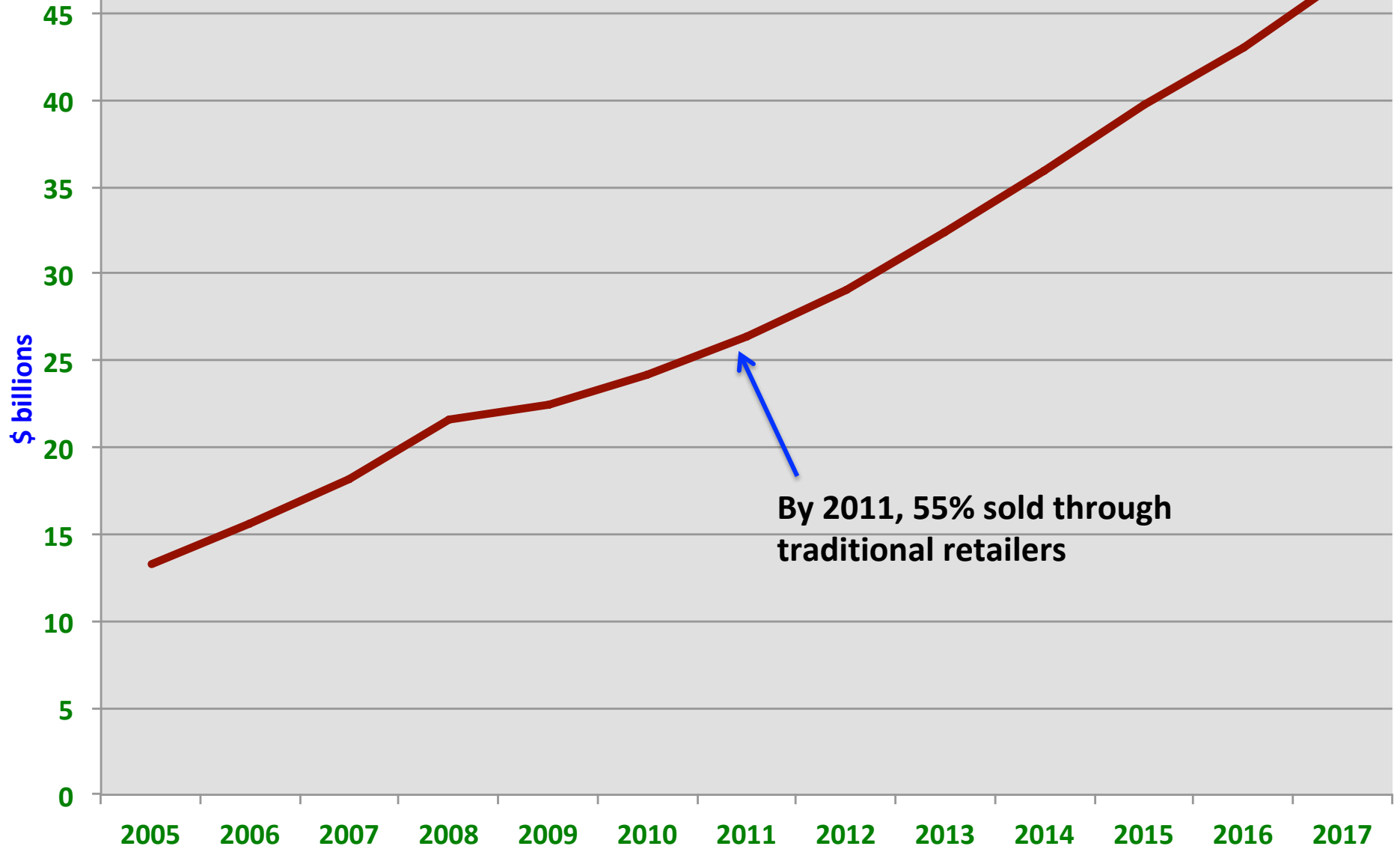


## Organic Food Sales in US, 2005 - 2017





## Organic Food Sales in US, 2005 - 2017



By 2011, 55% sold through traditional retailers



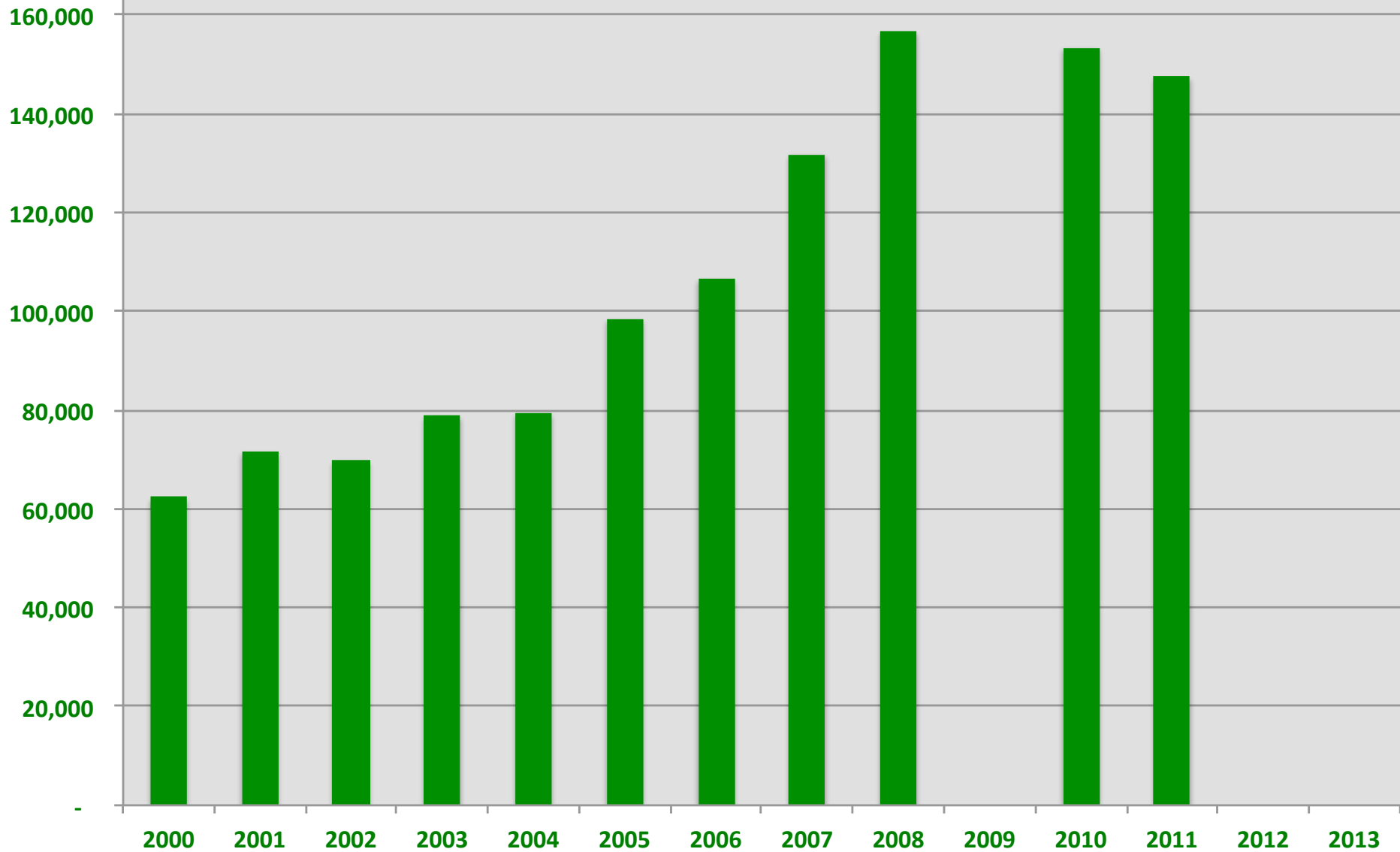
# Organic Vegetable Markets



Maple Springs Farm, Harrison, Maine



## Certified Organic Vegetable Acres in US, 2000 - 2013





## Trends in Organic Vegetable Markets

**Organic vegetables now available at WalMart, ALDI, etc.**

**Labor and land are cheaper in Mexico, other nations**

**Many growers do not trust any government program**

**Rise in “Non-certified but chemical free”**

**Growers want to sell wholesale but lack market power, volume, and certifications**

**Even food banks are delivering direct to consumers**



## **Trends in Organic Vegetable Direct Markets**

**Many farmers want to step back from farmers' market sales**

**CSA renewal rates are declining**

**Those farms that have built the strongest connection with CSA members are the ones that report best renewal rates**

**Many farms are delivering direct to prosperous customers**

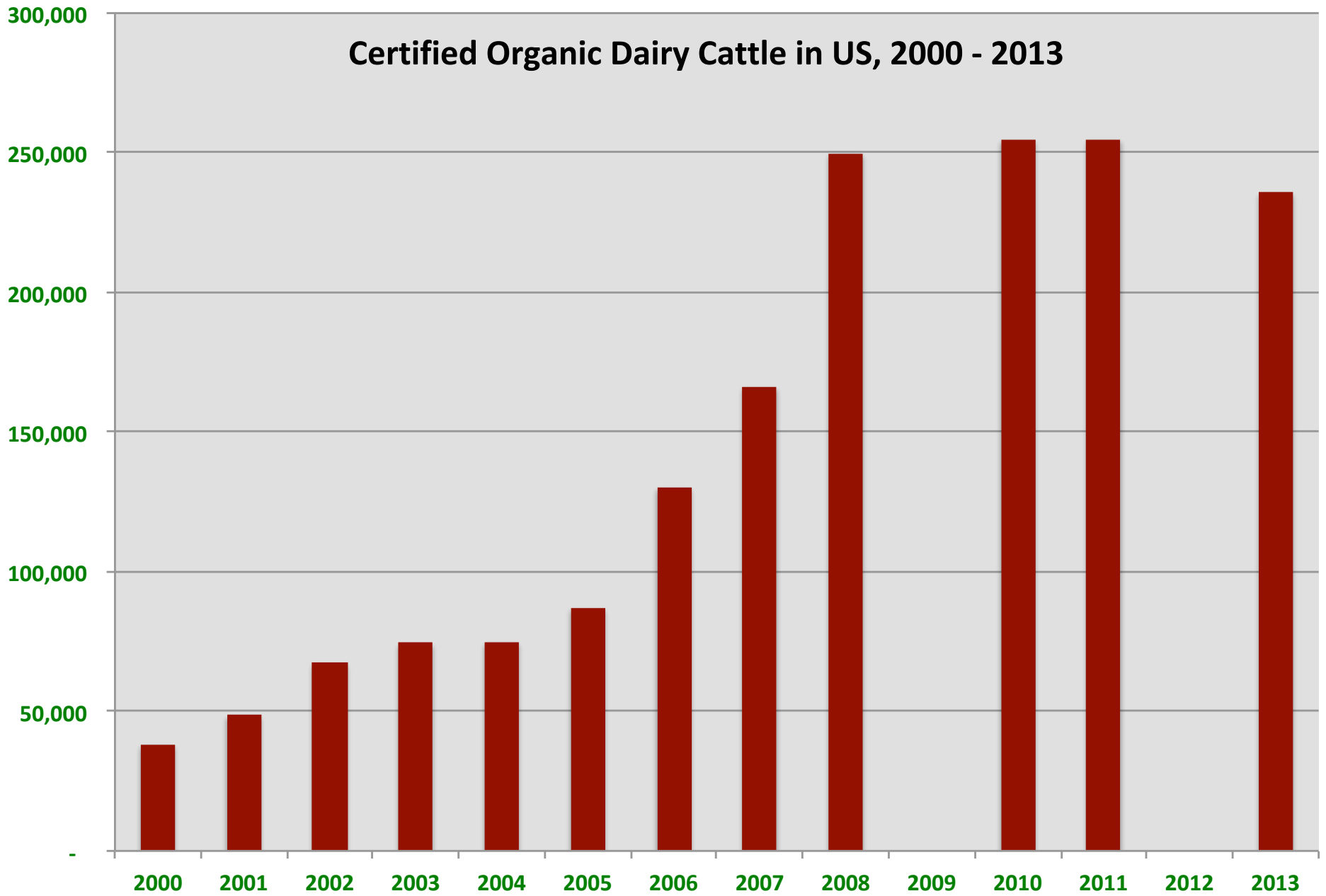


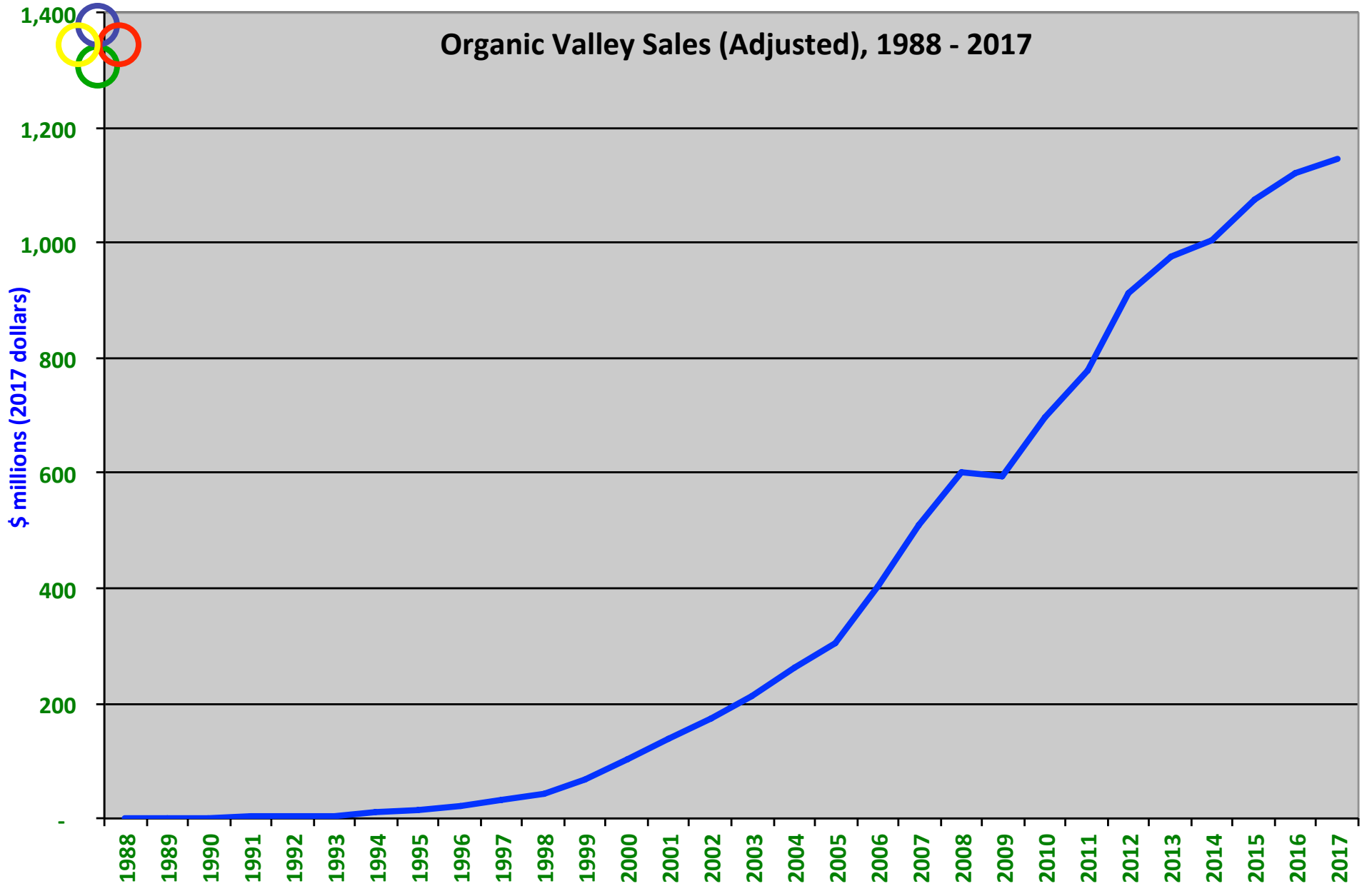


**Organic Dairy**

**Dix/Hall Farm — Pomeroy, Ohio**

### Certified Organic Dairy Cattle in US, 2000 - 2013





Organic Valley annual reports



## Key Elements of Organic Valley Success

- Engage 2,043 farmers in Co-op
- Offer services to farmer members
- Commands 20% of OG milk market
- Sell through eight regional dairy pools
- Work with existing processors
- Self-fund the co-op (member equity; grow when sales allow)
- Pay higher price for milk
- Profit sharing when possible
- Share the pain when needed
- Supply Management
- 42% of dairy farmers are Amish or Mennonite



## Key Elements of Organic Valley Success

- **Farmers vote on pay price each year**
- **Marketing campaigns feature farmers**
- **Stopped selling to some larger superstores to focus supply on co-ops and mid-level grocers**
- **Built contingency funds for sparse times**
- **“It’s our culture that make us so unique” Sarah Holm**

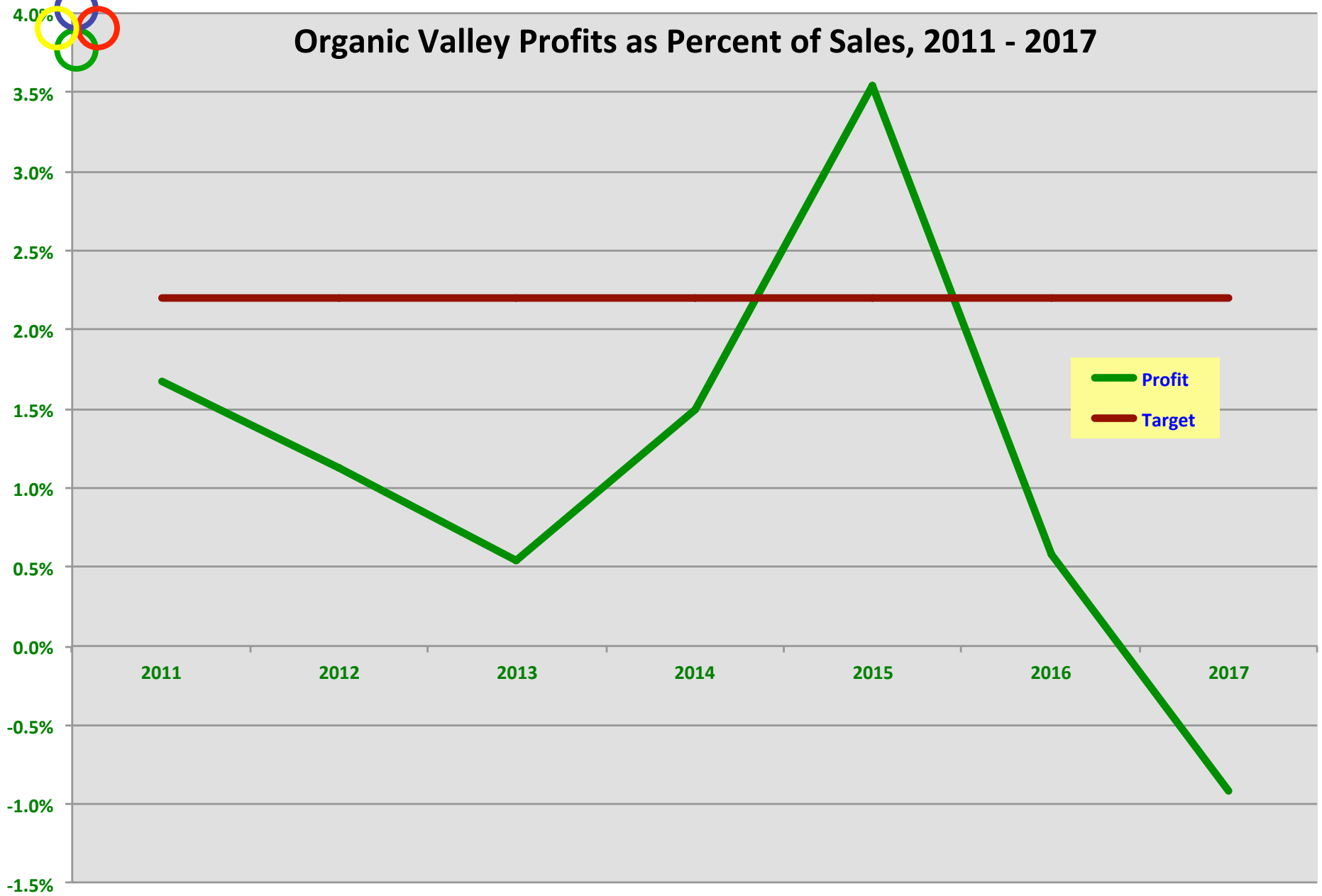


## Limits to Organic Valley Success

- **Supplies Metro markets primarily**
- **Many rural areas underserved**
- **Some farmers complain the Co-op is “too big”**
- **Competition has created harsh conditions**
  - **Oversupply of milk**
  - **Sales decline slightly**
  - **Competition in Pay Price**
  - **Other buyers try to lure farmers away**

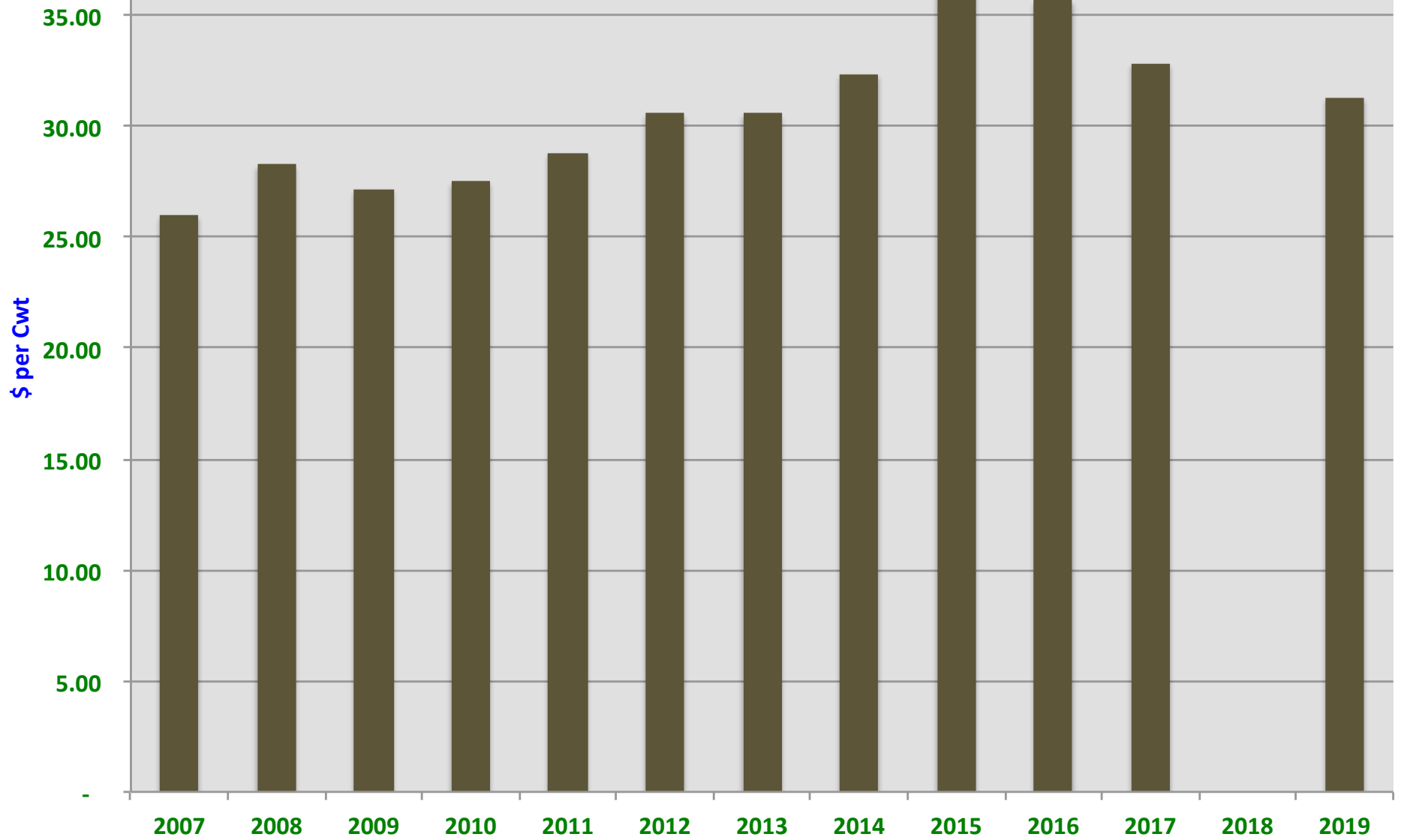


## Organic Valley Profits as Percent of Sales, 2011 - 2017





### Organic Valley Pay Price for Milk, 2007-2019



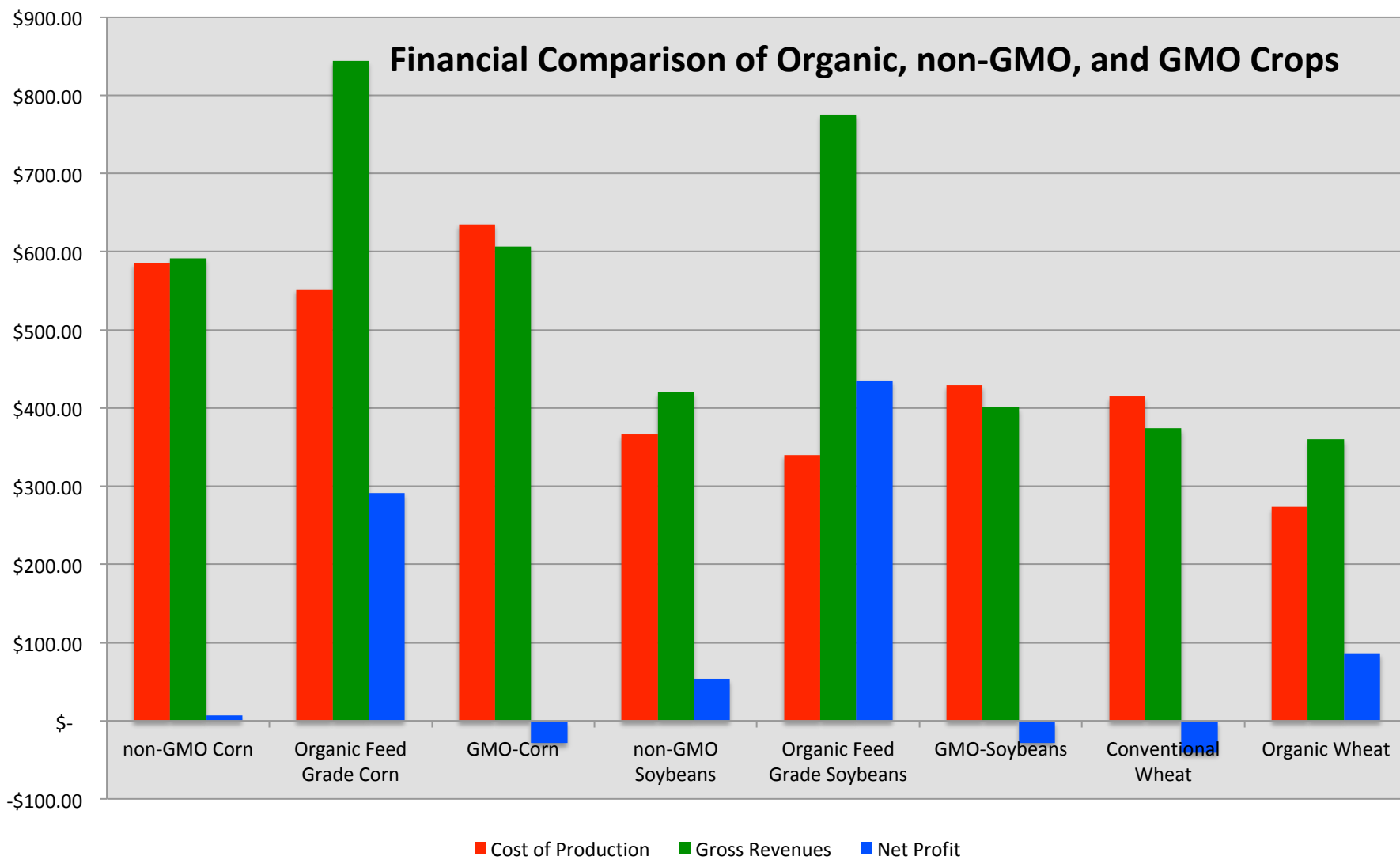




## Organic Grain



Moving Meadows Farm, Culpeper, Virginia





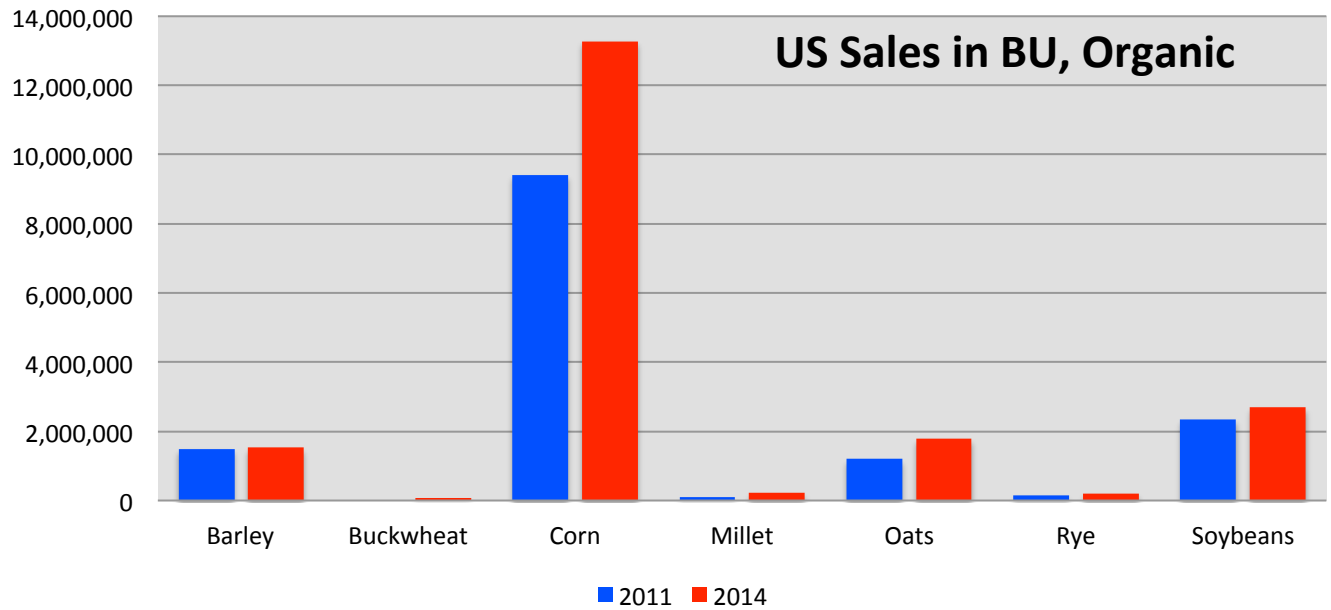
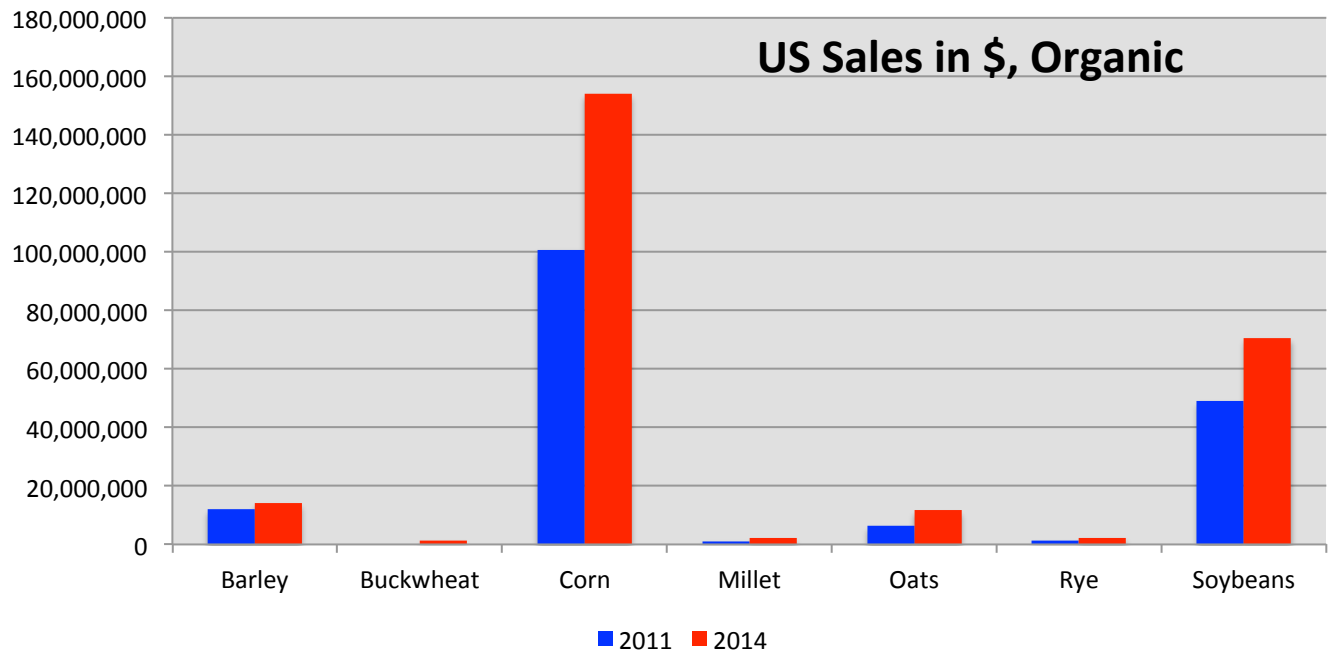
## Conventional vs. Organic Grain

- **US is largest grower and exporter of soybeans and corn**
  - **40% of soybeans and 20% of corn crops exported**
- **Some of US' biggest imports are organic soybeans and corn**
  - **74% of US Organic soybean supply**
  - **37% of US Organic corn supply**
- **2017 brought reports of widespread organic fraud on imports**

The USDA “was unable to provide reasonable assurance that ... required documents were reviewed at U.S. ports of entry to verify that imported agricultural products labeled as organic were from certified organic foreign farms,” according to [the report](#) released Monday. “The lack of controls at U.S. ports of entry increases the risk that nonorganic products may be imported as organic into the United States and could create an unfair economic environment for U.S. organic producers.”

- **Imports have slowed, 2018 < 2017 < 2016.**

**Washington Post, 2017; Mercaris, 2017; Agromeris, 2018**





## **Organic Grain Collaborators (MOSES)**

**Local & Broader Collaborations  
to Support Other Growers**



## **Organic Grain Collaborators (MOSES)**

**Thor Oeschner, Oeschner Farms** (Newfield, New York)

- **Farmer Ground Flour** (Freshly milled heritage grains)  
“Farmer-owned and cooperatively managed”
- **Wide Awake Bakery with Bread CSA**

**Harold Wilken, Janie’s Farm** (Danforth, Illinois)

- **2,400 Acres of Organic Grain**
- Certified Organic flour mill, The Mill @ Janie’s Farm

**John & Halee Wepking, Meadowlark Organics** (Ridgeway, Wisconsin) *With Paul Bickford, Bickford Organics*

- Grains milled by Lonesome Stone Milling



# Organic Grain Collaborators (MOSES)

## **Thor Oeschner, Oeschner Farms** (Newfield, New York)

- Started as car mechanic
- Family background in farming
- “Stony soil led to an emphasis on small grains”

## **Farmer Ground Flour**

- Freshly milled heritage grains
- “Farmer-owned and cooperatively managed”
- Wanted Value-added product
- New York Consumers want fresh flour (sell @ Greenmarket)

## **Wide Awake Bakery with Bread CSA**

## **Partner with nearby farms**

- “Relationships”
- “Mutual Trust and Honesty”
- Transparent about prices at every stage





# Organic Grain Collaborators (MOSES)

**Thor Oeschner, Oeschner Farms** (Newfield, New York)

## **Diverse Crops; Rotation; Cover Crops**

- Corn
- Wheat (SWW, HRW, HRSW)
- Rye
- Buckwheat
- Red Clover
- Mixed hay
- Soybeans
- Kernza
- Triticale
- Japanese Millet
- Annual Rye Grass
- Forage Turnip
- Forage Rape
- Winter Pea



## Organic Grain Collaborators (MOSES)



**Harold Wilken, Janie's Farm & The Mill at Janie's Farm, Danforth, Illinois**

- Neighbor inherited land; sought organic farmer
- Neighbor buys hay to feed cattle
- Wilken buys grain from neighboring farms
- Variable lease (flat rate plus 1/3 share of sale price to owner)
- Mills into flour
- Sells into Chicago, St. Louis, and Ann Arbor markets



## Organic Grain Collaborators (MOSES)

**John and Halee Wepking, Meadowlark Organics** (Ridgeway, Wisconsin)

*First generation farmers working with Paul Bickford, Bickford Organics*

- **Grains custom milled by Lonesome Stone Milling**
- “We Clean and dehull grain ourselves”
- Offer these services to other organic farmers
- Market to end users when possible
- Rely on larger buyers to move volume

**“The interest in growing outpaced the market opportunities.”**

**“Most end-users want farmer connections, but do not want to call many farmers when they need grain.”**



**WOLF Cooperative**



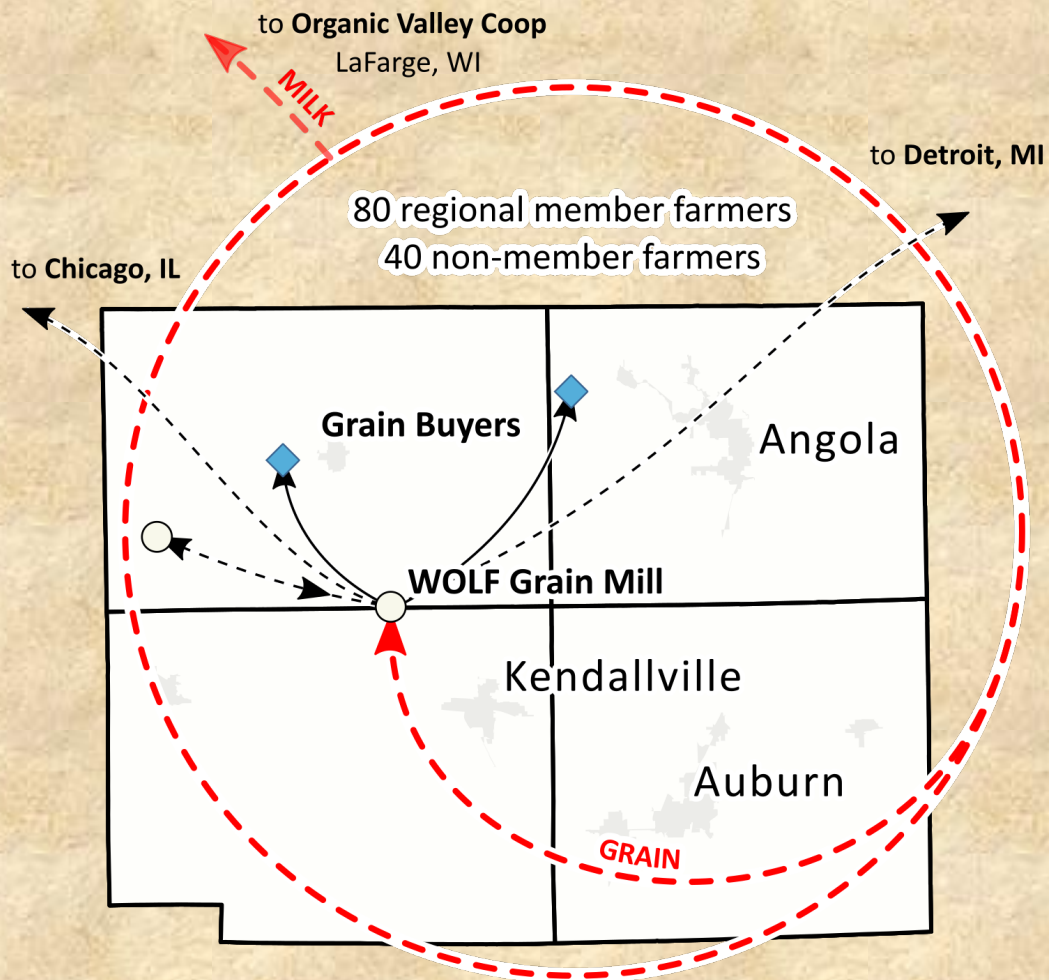
## **WOLF Co-operative, Northeast Indiana**

- **Launched by Amish Mill Owner**
- **Engaged his neighbors**
- **Jointly formed a co-operative**



# WOLF Cooperative

Suppliers & Partners



**Sales expanded from \$1.6 million to \$15 million in less than 3 years**



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**Additional Trends, Thoughts, & Stories**

Community Foods Across the Country



**Additional Trends, Thoughts, and Stories**



**“Local”** is a shorthand...



Photo: DSC

# “LOCAVORES” DEMAND

PRIMARY INTERESTS	SECONDARY	OTHER
<p><b>Intrinsic Qualities</b></p> <p>FRESHNESS NUTRITION SAFETY etc.</p> <p><i>Consumers believe local is more nutritious, safer, fresher</i></p>	<p><b>Extrinsic Qualities</b></p> <p>Community &amp; Economic Development Social Justice Farm Viability etc.</p> <p><i>Consumers want to support “the greater good”</i></p>	<p><b>Production Practices &amp; Transparency</b></p> <p>Organic Natural Free Range etc.</p>

**LOW PRIORITY:** *Price / Food Miles / Geographic Proximity*

# “LOCAVORES” DEMAND





# Vision for local food economies

**Build:**

**Health**

**Wealth**

**Connection**

**Capacity**



**Goal: to build  
Community-Based  
Food Systems**



Photo: DSC



## Community-Based Food Systems

Systems of exchange that strive to bring food producers and food consumers into affinity with each other...

...For the purposes of fostering community health, wealth, connection, and capacity



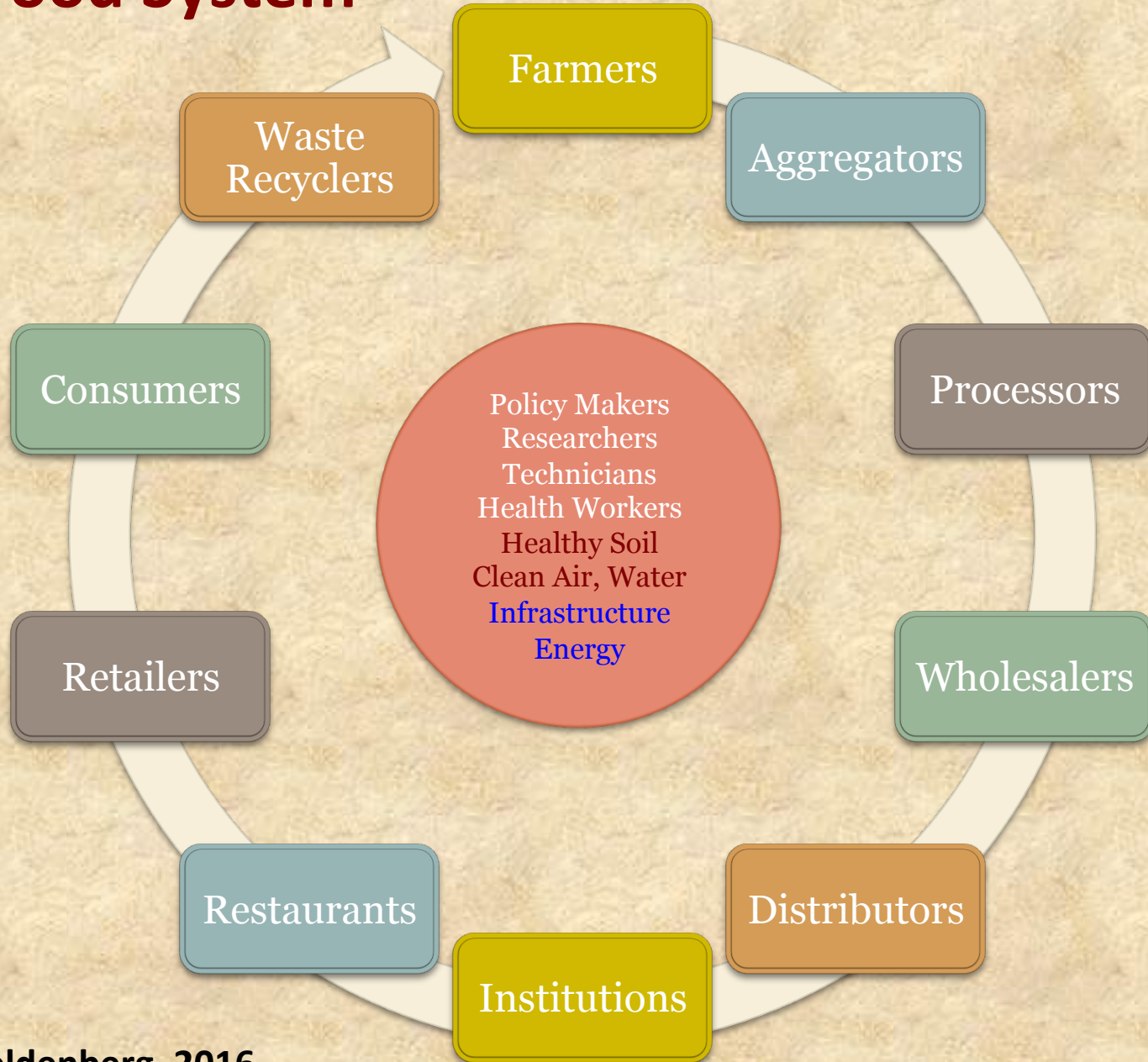


**What differentiates “local” food  
is that it  
builds community connections**

**Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture: 1Local**



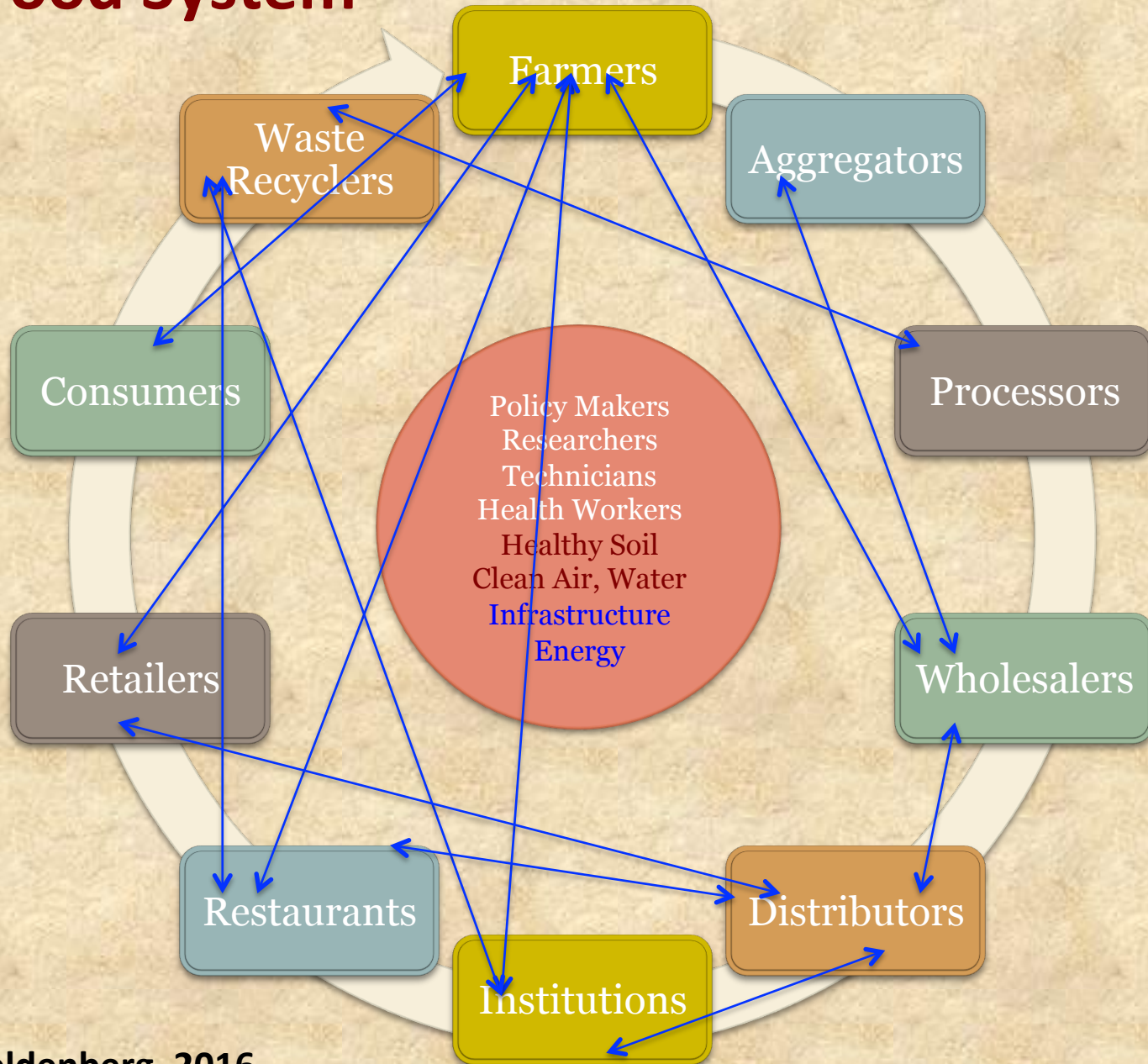
# Food System







# Food System





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Additional Trends, Thoughts, & Stories

**Community Foods Across the Country**



**Corinna, Kurt, & Jed Bench**

**Elmore, Ohio**

Matt & Jerica Cadman



East Texas

Newt Lynn



7760

JOHN D

Shreveport, Louisiana



# Fayetteville



Ozark Natural Foods Co-op



If each US resident bought \$5 of food directly from some farm each week...

...farms would earn **\$83 billion**  
**20% of what farms currently sell**

Meter: Population x 5 x 52



# Eat 5 Buy \$5

servings of fruit and vegetables per day

per week from a local producer

11,000 = households  
X \$5 per week  
= \$1.9 Million annually  
for  
Montezuma County  
Producers



Adopt  
marketing  
campaign

## Healthy food, people, economy

**Eat 5 servings of fruit and vegetables per day and reduce your risk of:**

**Spend \$5 per week with a local producer and**

- Obesity → Create local jobs
- Type 2 Diabetes → Support a farmer you know
- Heart Disease → Promote self-reliance
- Chronic Disease → Increase availability of farm-fresh food
- Cancer → Boost local revenue

Artwork by  
Carrie Cline  
Cortez, Colorado



 Atlanta

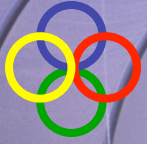




Flint, Michigan



Jacky & Dora King, King Karate



**Harvesting Earth Farm, Flint**



**PrairiErth Farm, Atlanta IL**



PrairiErth Farm, Atlanta IL



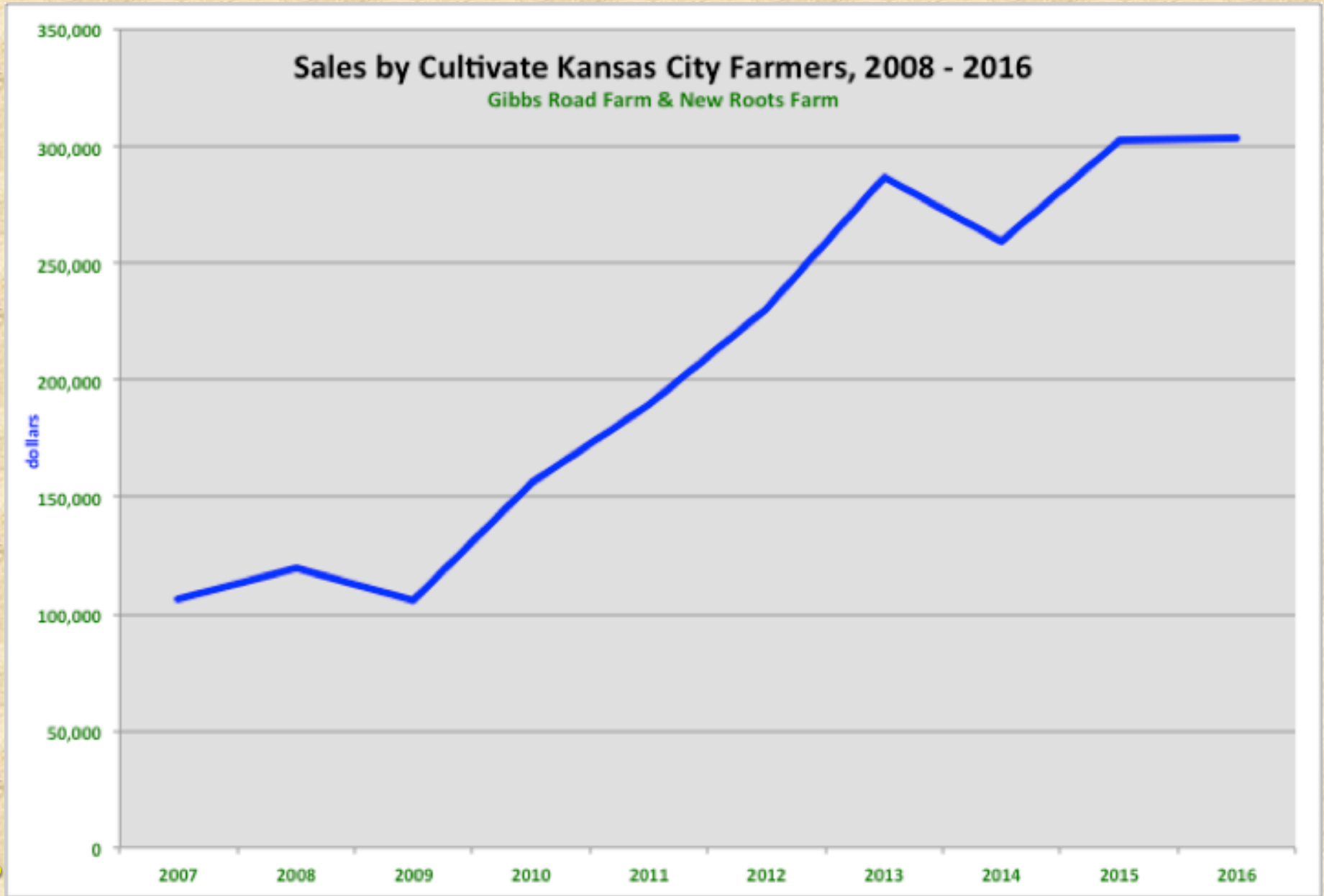
Cultivate Kansas City



Cultivate Kansas City



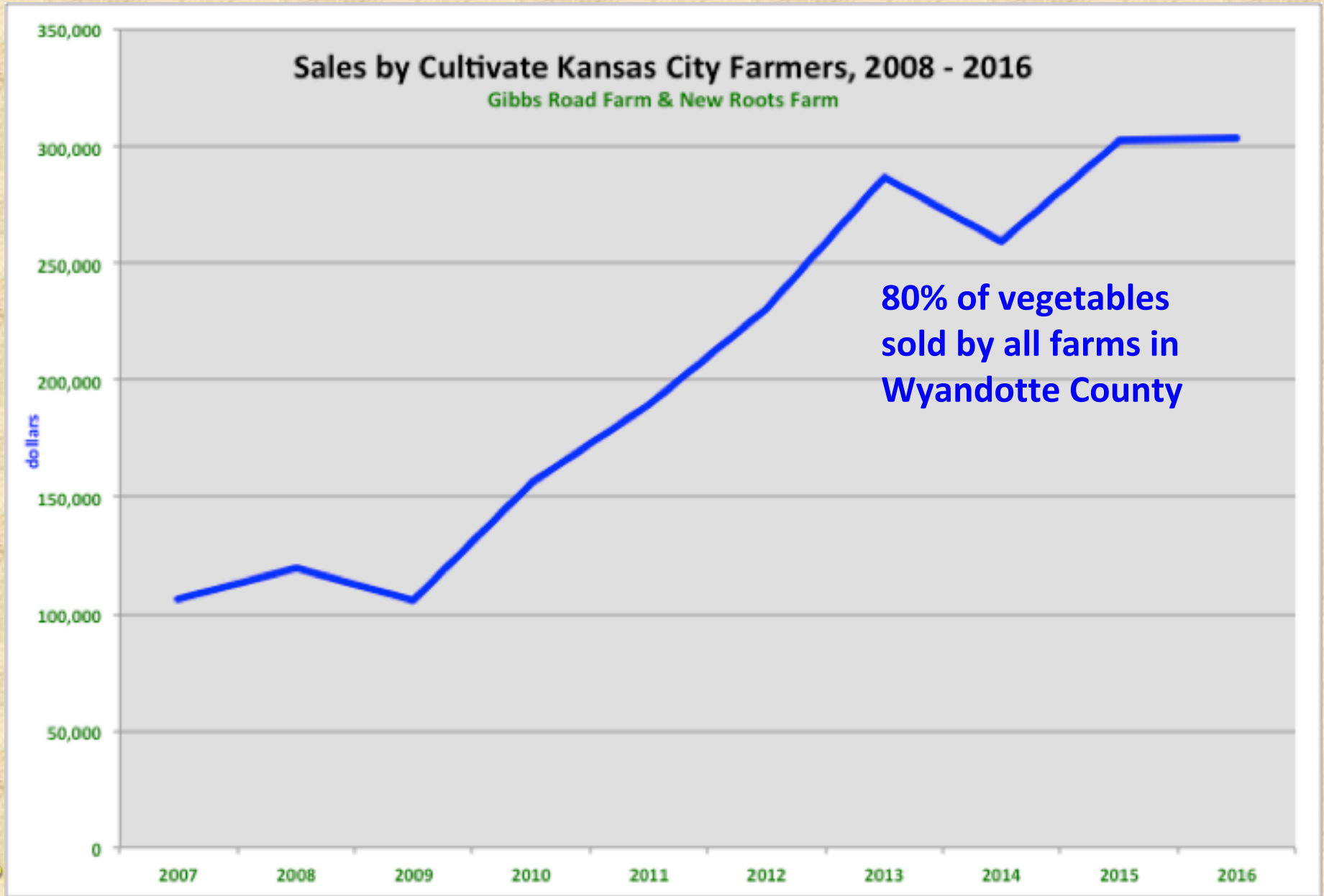
# Food Sales by Cultivate Kansas City (KS)







# Food Sales by Cultivate Kansas City (KS)



# Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership

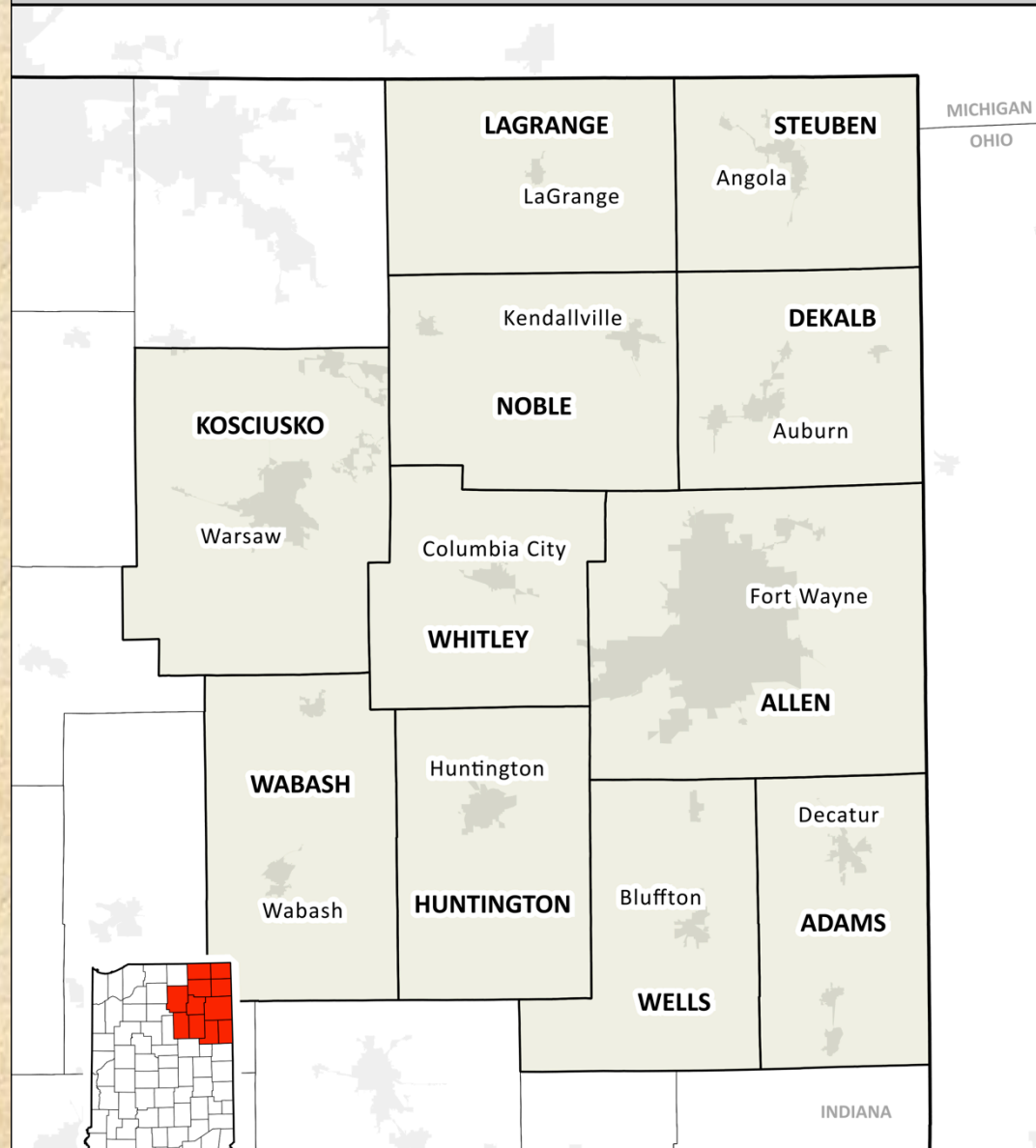
11 Local Economic  
Development  
Organizations

# Northeast Indiana Local Food Network





# Northeast Indiana Region



SOURCES : US Census Bureau TIGER 2010 Urban Areas; USDA / NRCS Counties 2002

Prepared for Ken Meter | Crossroads Resource Center | December 2015 | Mapping by Brendan Heberlein



## **NE Indiana Local Food Network**

**“Local food networks” are the commercial, social, and cultural connections that sustain food trade within Northeast Indiana.**



Welcome to

Seven Sons

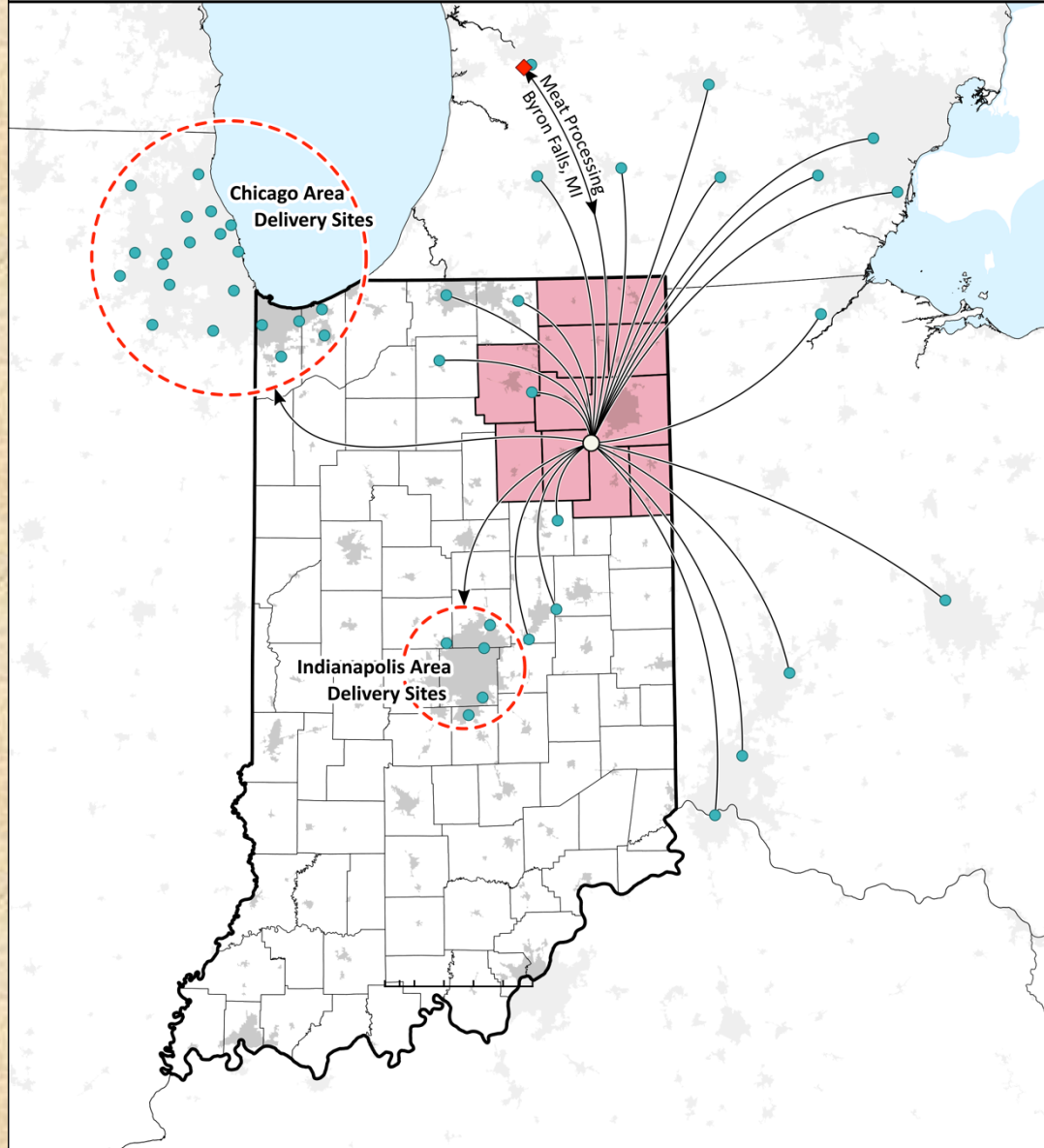


**Blaine Hitchfield**



# Seven Sons Farm

Delivery Sites



SOURCES : US Census Bureau TIGER/Line 2010 Urban Areas; USDA/NRCS Counties 2002; GLIN Great Lakes Boundaries 2012  
Prepared for Ken Meter | Crossroads Resource Center | December 2015 | Mapping by Brendan Heberlein

**45 Drop Sites**



Seven Sons Farm – 265 dozen eggs / every day





# Arizona



Tucson



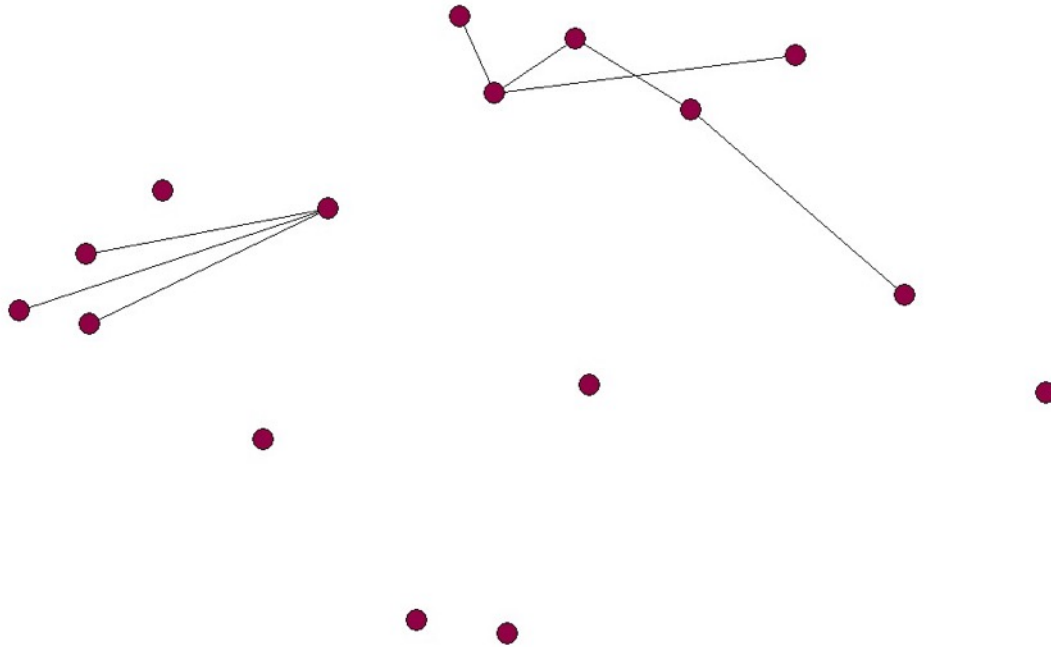
Phoenix



Phoenix



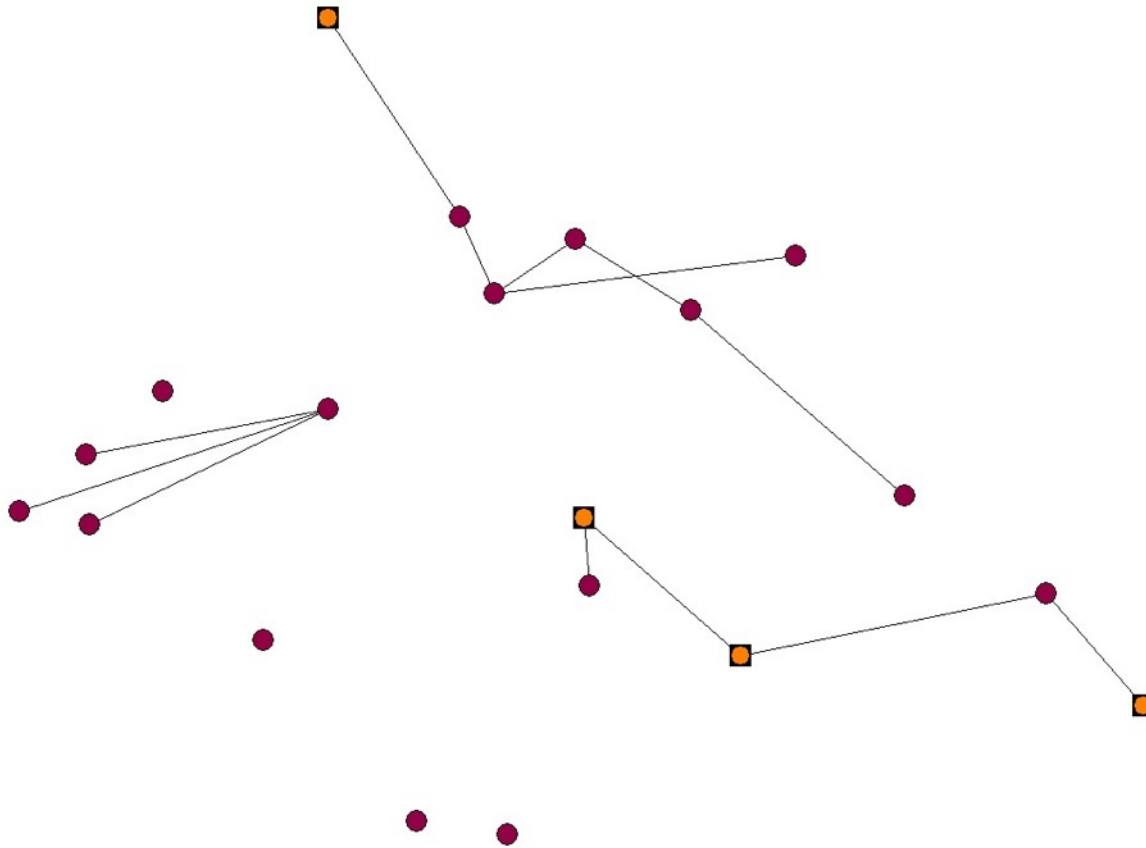
**Farmers Only**



**Meter, Goldenberg, & Ross 2018**



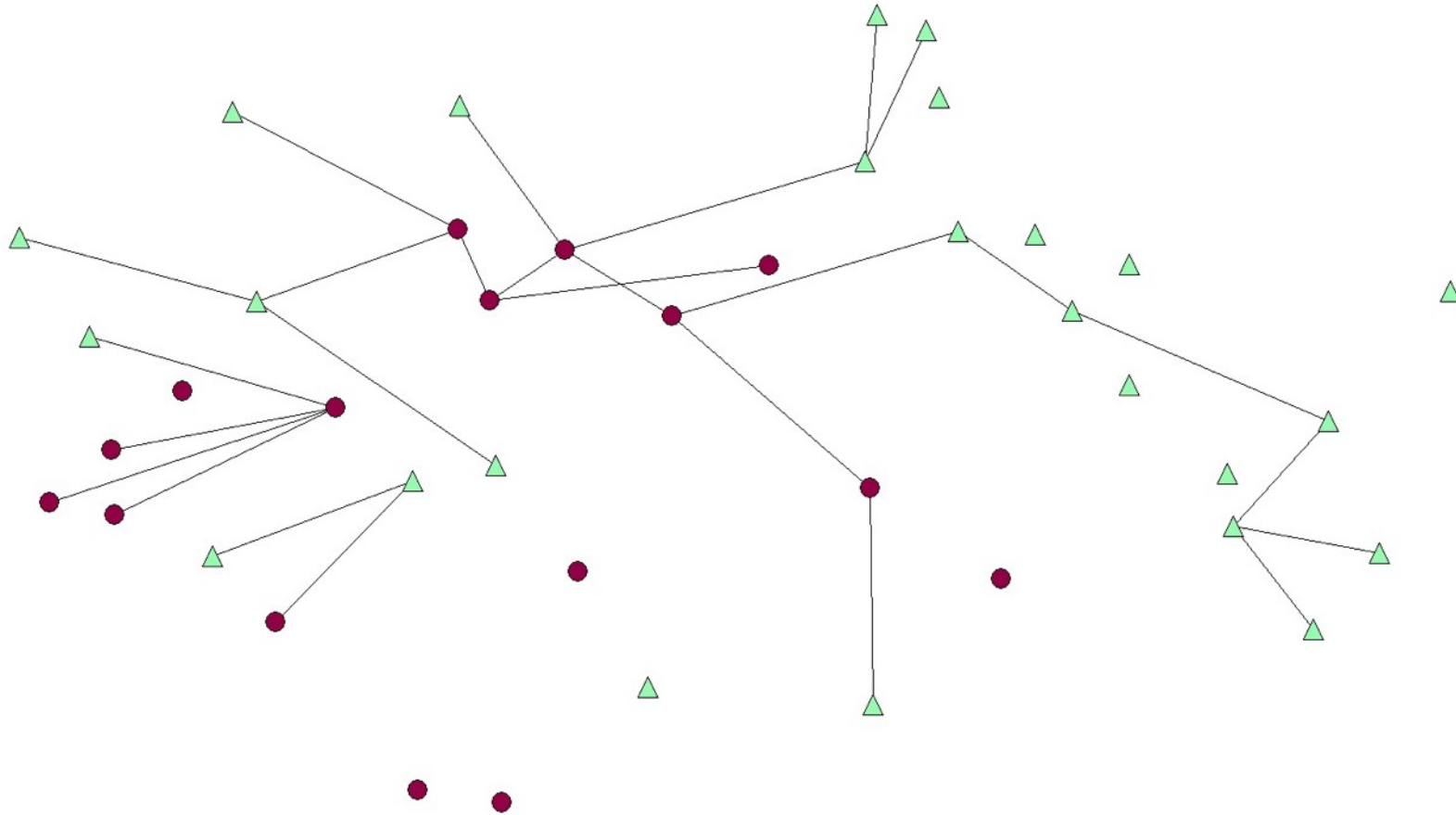
## Farmers and Farm Organizations



Meter, Goldenberg, & Ross 2018



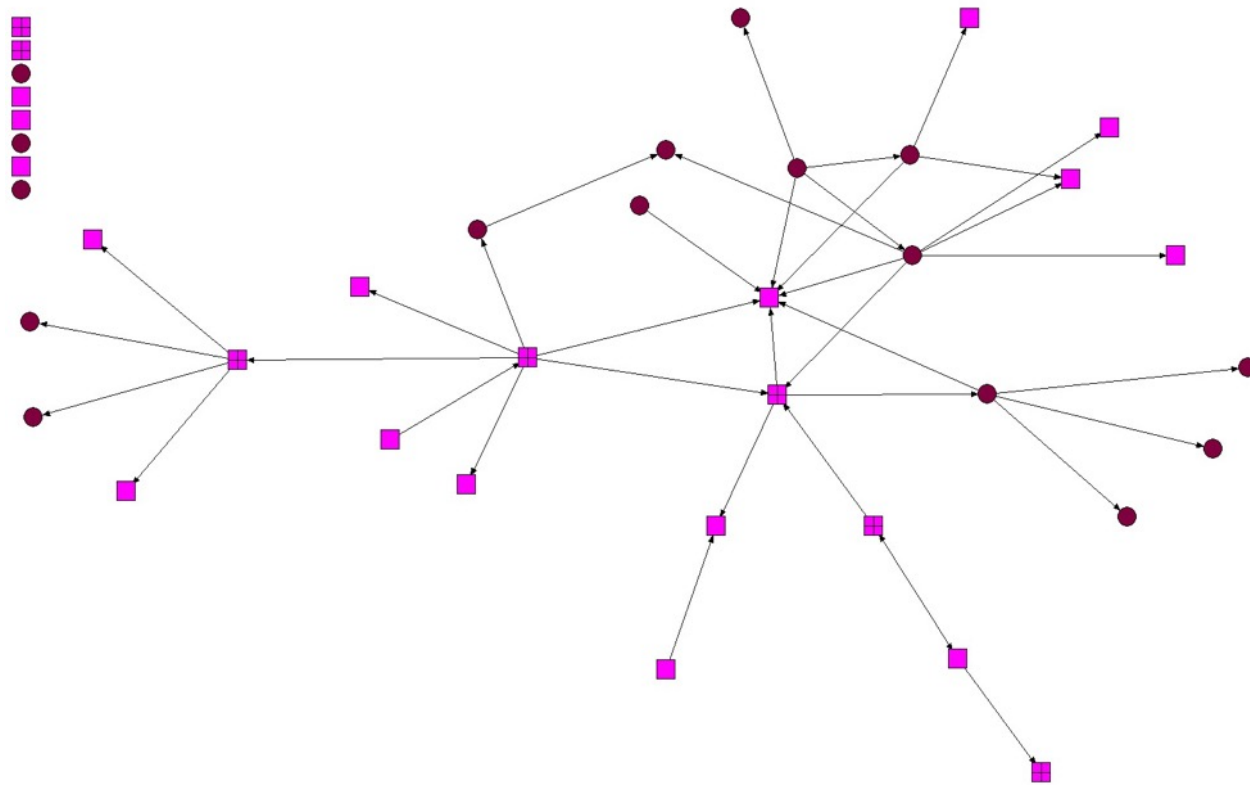
## Farmers and Nonprofits



Meter, Goldenberg, & Ross 2018



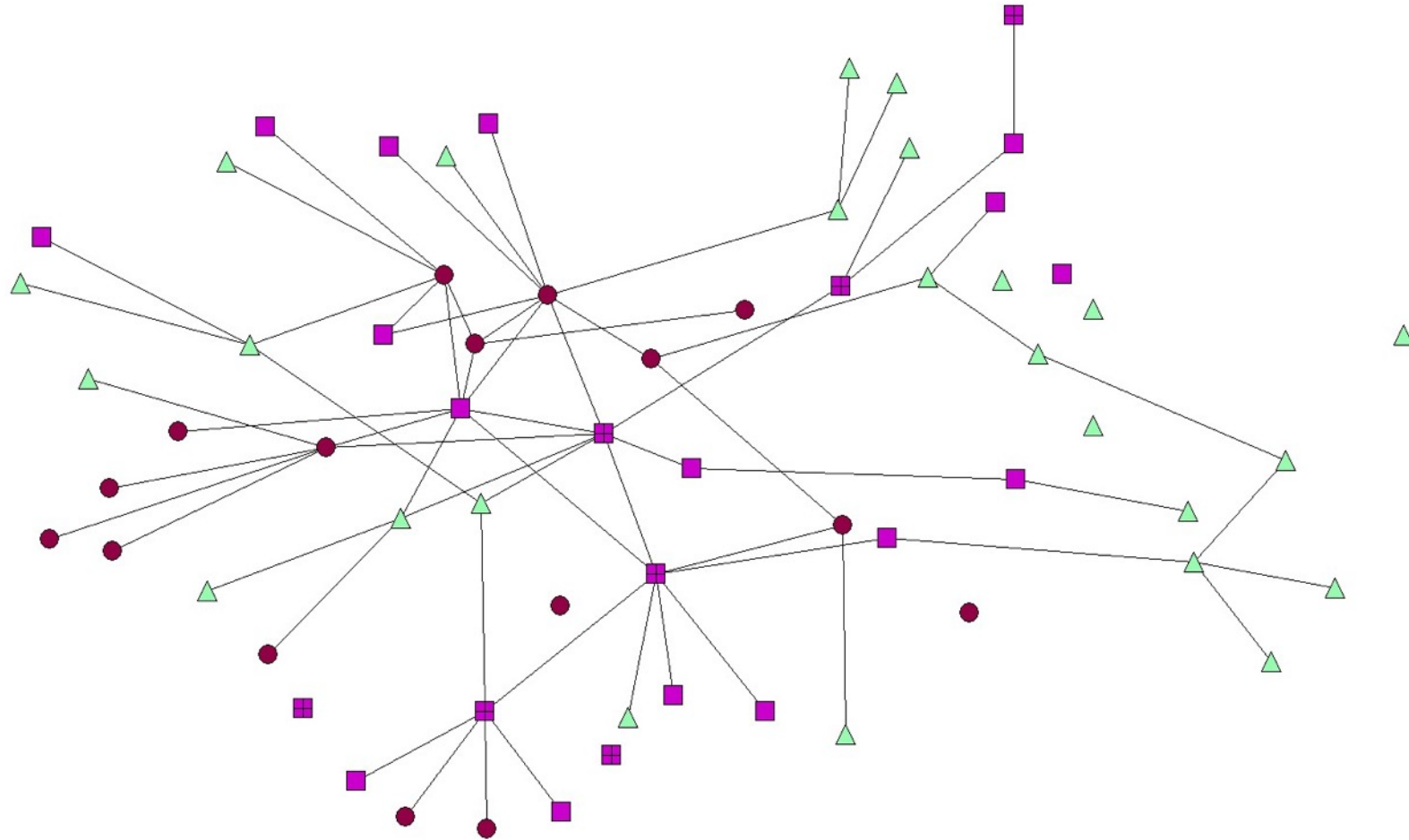
## Farmers and Buyers



Meter, Goldenberg, & Ross 2018



## Farmers and Nonprofits and Buyers

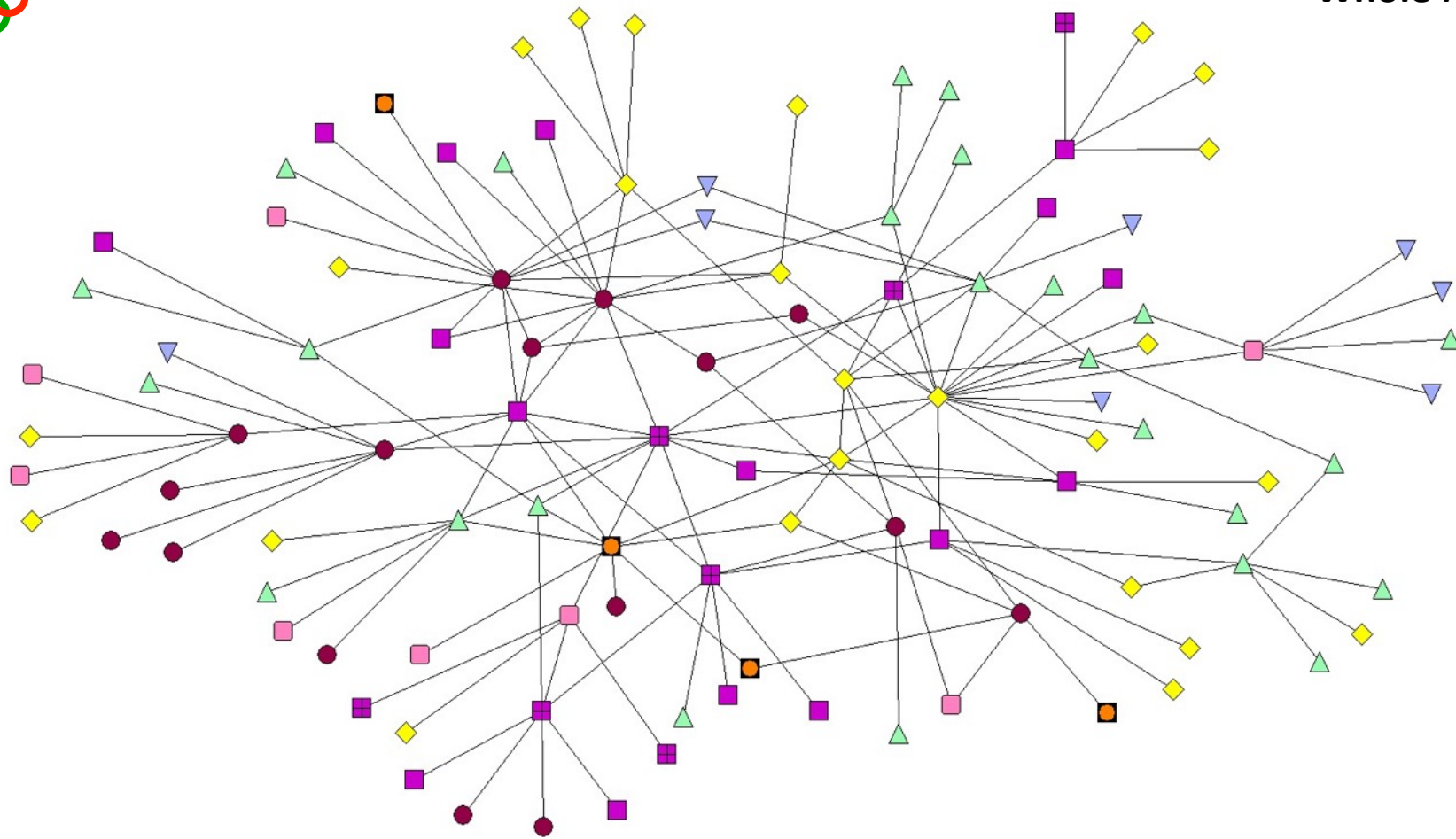


Meter, Goldenberg, & Ross 2018





## Whole Network



Meter, Goldenberg, & Ross 2018



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# Local Farm & Food Economy Studies

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