Linn County
Food Systems Council

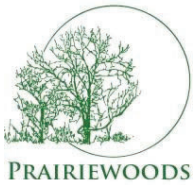
Community Food System Assessment

EAST CENTRAL IOWA
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

LINN
COUNTY

Thank you to the Linn County Food Systems Council for investing resources in Linn County to support production and access to healthy food for the community.





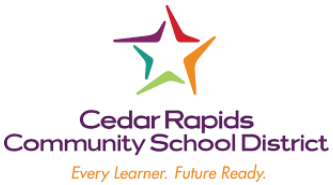






























Council Members	Organization
Emmaly Renshaw	Iowa Valley RC&D
Hailee Sandberg	Iowa State Extension - Linn County
Kim Guardado	HACAP Food Reservoir
Aaron Tarchinski	Horizons
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Drew Erickson	Rodale Institute Midwest Organic Center
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Mariah Andrews	Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center
Brittany Rohling	Grand Living
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Gina Molby	New Pioneer Food Co-op
Eva Donnelly	Iowa State Extension and Outreach
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Acronyms and Abbreviations:

AMI: Area Median Income
BLS: Bureau of Labor Statistics
DNR: Department of Natural Resources
EBT: Electronic Benefit Card
ERS: Economic Research Service (USDA)
EPA: Environmental Protection Agency
FARE: Food Access and Resiliency and Equity
FNS: Food and Nutrition Assistance (USDA)
HUD: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
IDALS: Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
LFPS: Local Food Purchase Assistance
LFS: Local Food for Schools
NASS: National Agricultural Statistics Service
SNAP: Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture
WIC: Women, Infants, and Children

Methodology:
All data is at the Linn County geographic level unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

A community food assessment provides a comprehensive tool to better understand the complexities of the local food system, highlighting both the opportunities and barriers that exist within the regional network.

The Linn County Food Policy Council will use this assessment to apply a systems-based approach to developing solutions and to establish baseline indicators for measuring progress and evaluating programs and policy recommendations over time.

This assessment draws on national datasets and incorporates local data sources whenever possible to ensure an accurate and context-specific understanding of Linn County's food system and to reinforce community input.




What is a food system?


U. S. FOOD SYSTEM
Trade Associations
Compost
Food Rescue
Food Waste Managment
Water
Land
Production
Farmers
Technical Service Providers
Policy Makers
Community Advocates
Hospitals
Grocers
Schools
Restaurants
Food Pantries
Accessing Food
Processing
Value Added Products
Packaging
Distribution
Wholesale
Retail
Government Agencies
Funders & Lenders
Research & Educators
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External Forces of Influence In the U.S. Food System



Community Advocates	Research & Educators	Technical Service Providers	Funders & Lenders	Trade Associations	Policy Makers	Government Agencies
The strongest drivers of local priorities.	Generate data, provide training, and drive system change.	Provide assistance to increase producer participation in aggregation and processing.	Funds may prioritize low perceived risk and view small diversified farms as high risk.	Often aligned with commodity systems and large-scale agribusiness interests.	Varies with political climate, will often reinforces industrial agriculture norms.	Agencies can provide funding and programs, but also create compliance burdens and instability.

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Within this assessment, the food system will be evaluated across the four central sectors with the greatest impact and potential for change on the local level. This framework will provide an understanding of how food in Linn County moves through the system.

Production =
Growing and harvesting food.

Processing =
Cleaning, preparing, packaging, transporting and storing food.

Access =
All retail and wholesale markets, institutions, food pantries and assistance programs.

Food Waste Management =
Rescuing food for consumption and compost.

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Conversations about the local food system are often divided into two components: **Local Food Production/Small Farm Viability and Access/Food Insecurity.**

At first glance, these appear to be in tension. Small farms often face higher production costs, limited distribution infrastructure, and smaller economies of scale - factors that can lead to higher prices for local foods. Higher prices, in turn, worsen food insecurity.

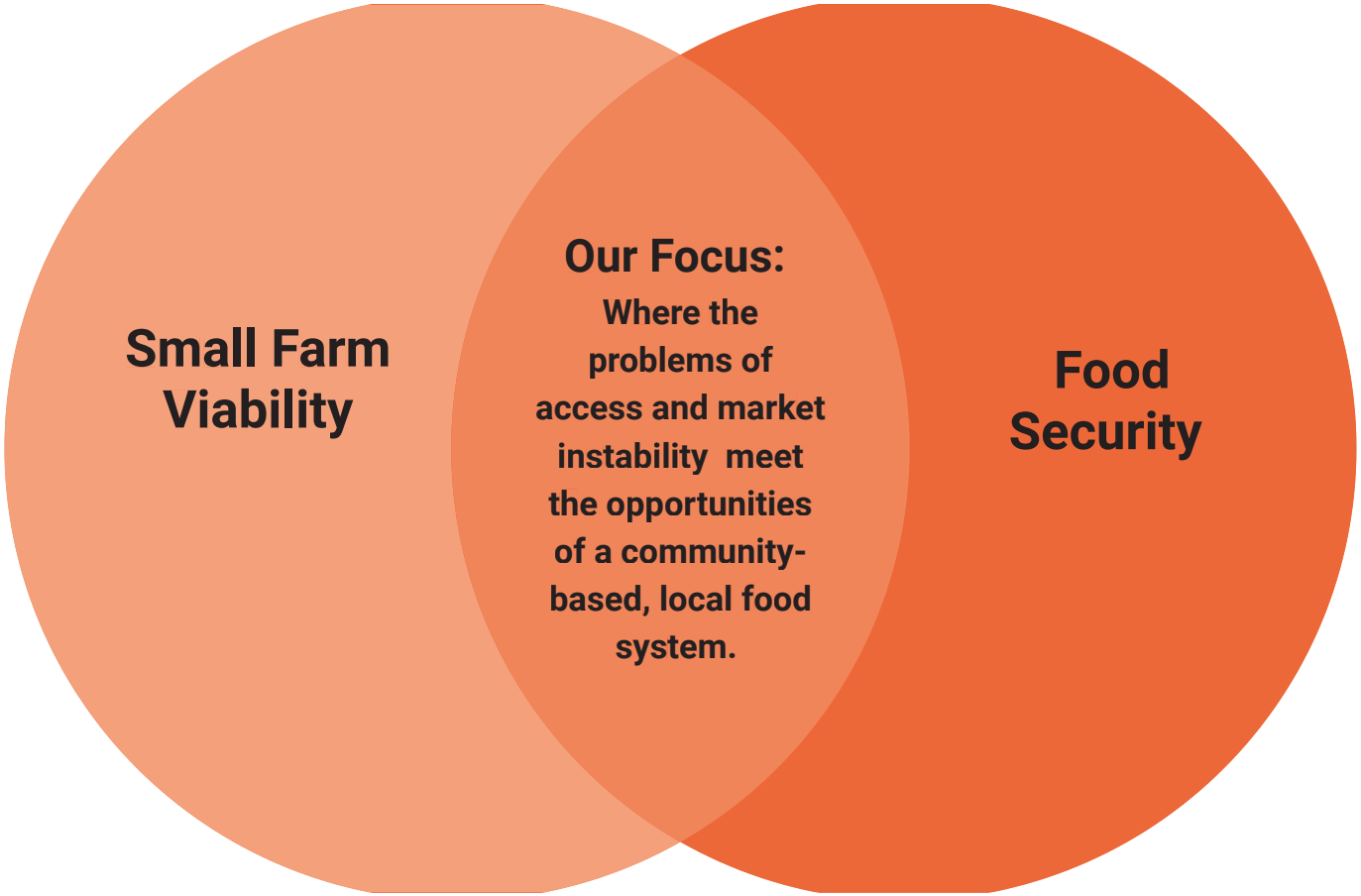
However these are not opposing forces and are influenced by the same conditions: land access, lack of infrastructure, market development, and public investment. When small farms become more viable, through shared infrastructure, aggregation, institutional purchasing, and policy support - Economies of Scale improve, production increases, and local foods become more affordable and accessible, strengthening food security.





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This overlap reinforces the need to focus on strategies where farmers can thrive and all residents can reliably access healthy, local food that meets their individual needs.



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Agriculture Corporate Influence

The strain within the local food system stems less from conflict between producers and food access organizations and more from the outsized influence of the large corporations embedded in each sector.

In Linn County, the role of major agricultural corporations is widely recognized. The region's landscape is shaped by corn and soybean production and contract livestock operations, all of which reinforce a system where farmland, financing, crop insurance, and supply chains are geared toward commodity agriculture rather than diversified food production for local markets.

Corporate power also shapes the retail environment. National grocery store chains and their distribution systems determine pricing, purchasing standards, and volume requirements that many local producers cannot realistically meet.

For farmers, these corporate dynamics drive up the cost of entry, create infrastructure limitations, and restrict valuable pathways to local and regional markets.

Right-To-Farm In Iowa

Iowa "Right-to-Farm" laws shield large farming operations from nuisance lawsuits and restrict local intervention.

Under Iowa law, counties may not use zoning to block Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). The debate over CAFO rules is fueled by ongoing water quality problems, including nitrate contamination and algae blooms.

Iowa Right-to-Farm laws reinforce consolidation and inflate land values

Number of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) in Iowa:

1990: 789 (Before Deregulation)
2022: 4,200

Source: Bronin, Sara, Key to the City: How Zoning Shapes Our World, 2024

Hunger Relief Corporate Influence

Corporate influence extends into philanthropy and community partnerships, where donations shape public messaging and reduce political pressure for systems change. Despite the presence of more than 200 food banks and 60,000 pantries distributing over $5 billion in food annually, hunger persists and food insecurity rates continue to rise. The U.S. remains the only major nation that supports low-income households primarily through food programs tied to the agri-food industry rather than direct cash assistance.

Food banks are heavily dependent on corporate donors, and major companies often hold influential board seats - Kroger sits on 32 food bank boards and Walmart on 31. To qualify for this level of affiliation corporations donate million in cash or tens of millions of pounds of food, benefiting from tax deductions that allow them to write off the cost, plus a portion of the markup, reduce waste-disposal costs, and enhance their public image. Some donors even require nonprofits to avoid advocacy positions that conflict with corporate interests, limiting efforts to push for structural solutions such as higher wages or stronger anti-poverty programs.

As a result, charitable food distribution offers short-term relief but does little to address the root causes of hunger or reduce long-term food insecurity.

Corporate dominance reinforces a system that relies on charitable food networks rather than community-based food access. Understanding this influence highlights the importance of developing community-based solutions to build a more resilient local food system.

Food workers tend to have the highest participation in SNAP among all workers. They are twice as likely to need SNAP as the average worker.

- 19% of SNAP recipients work in farming/fishing
- 18% of SNAP recipients work in food preparation

A study across 15 States revealed these corporations employ the largest percentage of SNAP recipients:

Wal-Mart
McDonald's
Kroger
Tyson Foods
Dollar General
Amazon
Burger King
Wendy's
Subway
Taco Bell

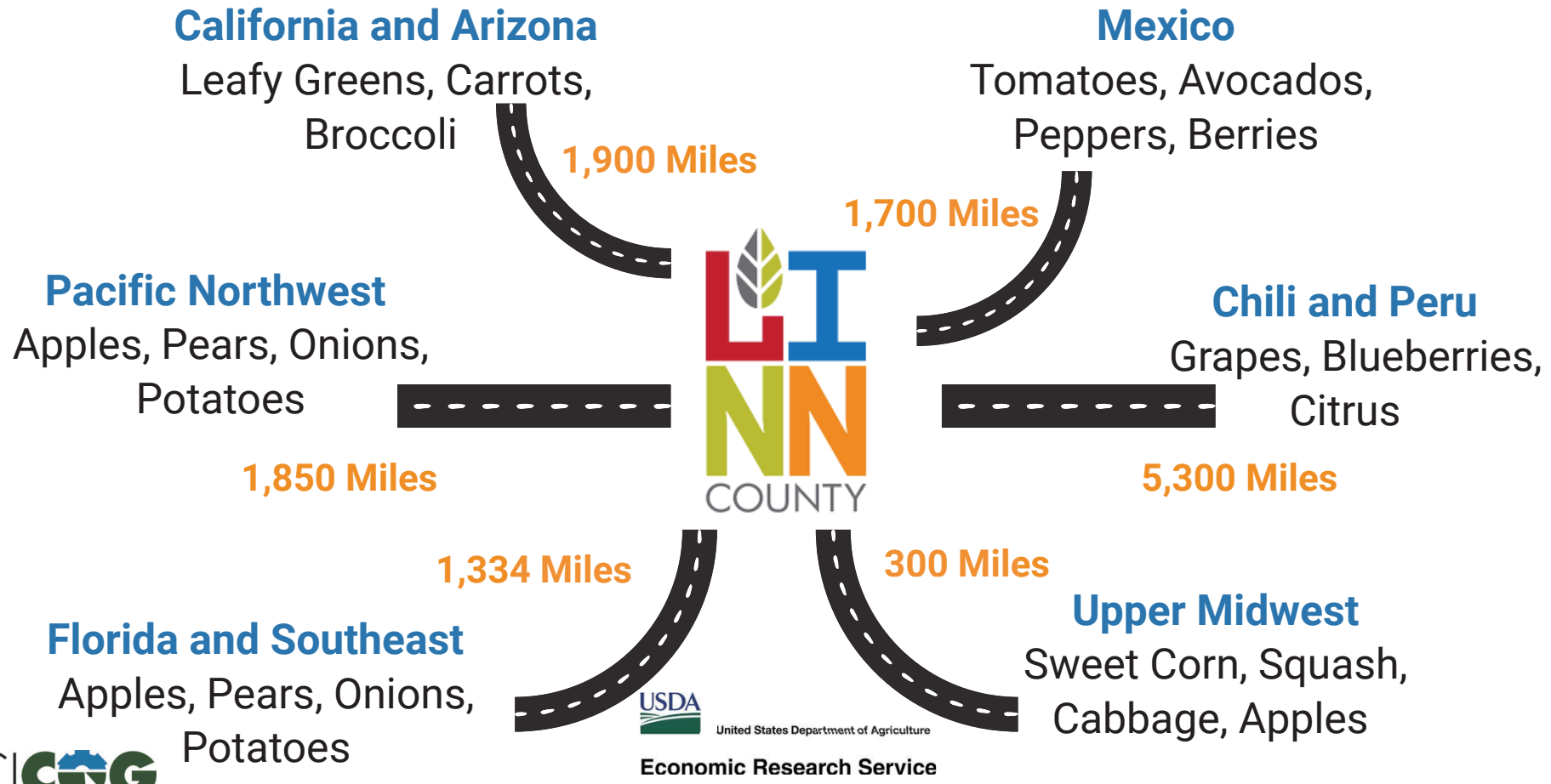
Source: Union of Concerned Scientists: How Big Good Corporations Take Advantage of SNAP/Fisher, Andrew. Big Hunger: The Unholy Alliance Between Corporate America and Anti-Hunger Groups

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Why “local”?

Imported Fruits and Vegetables

USDA estimates of how far food consumed in Linn County travels from field to grocery store:



USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Economic Research Service

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	Locally Grown Travel Miles
Apple	61
Beans	65
Broccoli	20
Cabbage	50
Carrots	27
Garlic	31
Lettuce	43
Onions	35
Peppers	44
Spinach	36
Squash	52
Strawberries	56
Sweet Corn	20
Tomatoes	60

Source: Leupold Center For Sustainable Agriculture/ATTRA

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Field to Fork: Travel Miles and Time

Locally Grown Field to Fork → 48 Hours

- Harvested when ripe
- Fast pre-cool
- Minimal packing
- Short ride

Imported Field to Fork → 3 to 8 Days

2 to 4 weeks if overseas!

- Harvested when “shipping mature”
- Rigorous pre-cool
- Graded/packed to specifications
- Refrigerated transport
- Repack/ripening at distribution center
- Transport to retail center

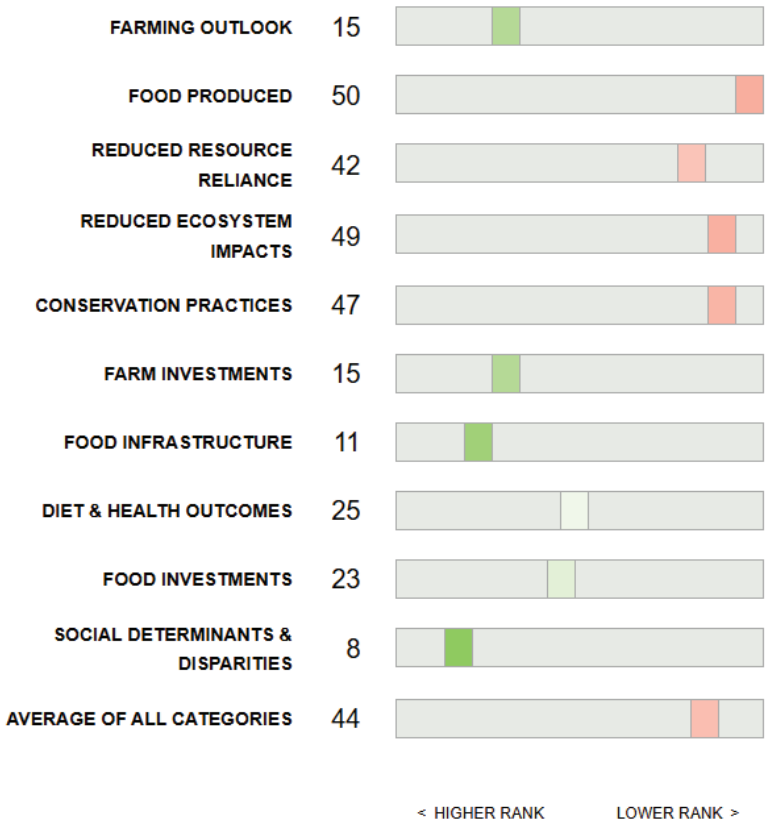
50-State Food System Scorecard

A 50-State Scorecard was developed by researchers to examine the overall health and sustainability of the food system across the United States. A wide range of indicators were grouped into 10 broad categories, and scores were calculated for each state.

The results show both success and room for improvement in Iowa.

The average score of all categories in Iowa ranked our state near the bottom, as 44th, in the overall health of our food system.

Iowa

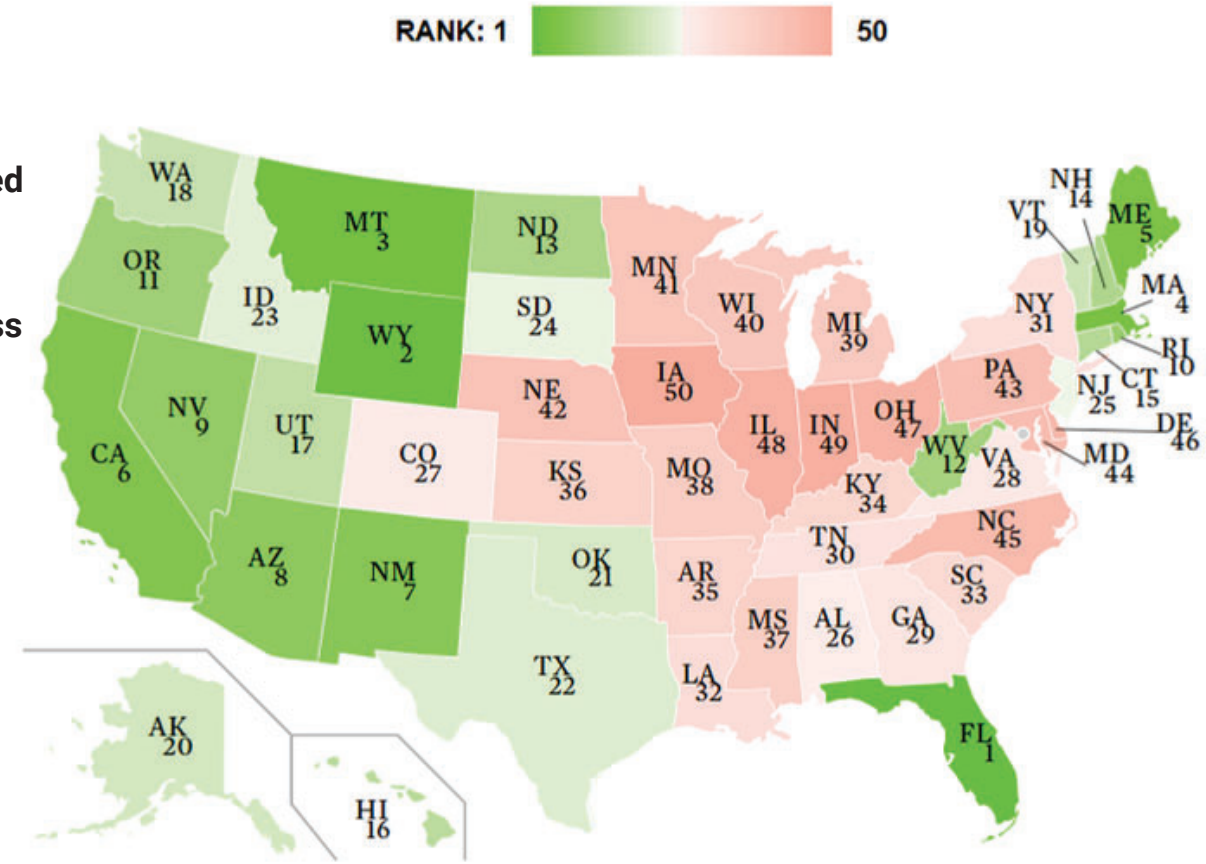


Source: Union of Concerned Scientists (MIT) 50-State Food System Scorecard: Ranking the States on Farm and Food Health, June 2018

Food Production By State

In Iowa, the landscape is dominated by crops destined to become processed food ingredients, livestock feed, and biofuel with less farmland dedicated to growing foods that support healthy diets.

Iowa ranks LAST in food production in the United States.



Source: Union of Concerned Scientists (MIT) 50-State Food System Scorecard: Ranking the States on Farm and Food Health, June 2018

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Economic Impact Of Edible Crop Production

In 2022, edible horticulture crop farms supported $130 million in economic output. For every dollar of horticulture sales, edible horticulture crop farmers support roughly an additional $0.60 in output in the rest of the Iowa economy.

In 2023, $924,750,000 was spent on food in Linn County. If just 5% of those were local food purchases, it would result in an estimated economic impact of $46,237,500.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditures 2023 and Source: 2023 Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crops Survey

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A local food system is **not** just about how food travels from producer to consumer.

The community has control over who pays for the hidden costs of our food, such as the environmental impacts and healthcare costs associated with eating low-quality food.

A local food system creates a platform for a community to collectively and transparently decide what their food priorities are and who should bear the burden of any inequity.

(Lexicon of Food)

Corporations which grow produce for distribution across the country choose varieties for high yields and the ability to travel long distances. In contrast, local producers are more likely to chose varieties for flavor rather than yield. Research also indicates these higher yield varieties are lower in nutrients. Local produce has been found to have as much as 117% to 150% higher levels of nutrients and flavonoids. Fruits and vegetables additionally lose some of their nutrients during transportation and storage.

90% of food in Linn County is imported.

While transforming Linn County's food system may seem like a daunting task, this is precisely the moment to lead and shape its future. Linn County needs a food system that integrates farms into both rural and urban landscapes, conserves and renews natural resources, strengthens community wealth and promotes access. Above all, it must ensure that everyone's food, nutrition, and health needs are met - today and for generations to come.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditures 2023 and University of Hawaii, The Nutrition Benefits of Eating Locally, C. Watters

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Part I: Production

Production is dependent upon:

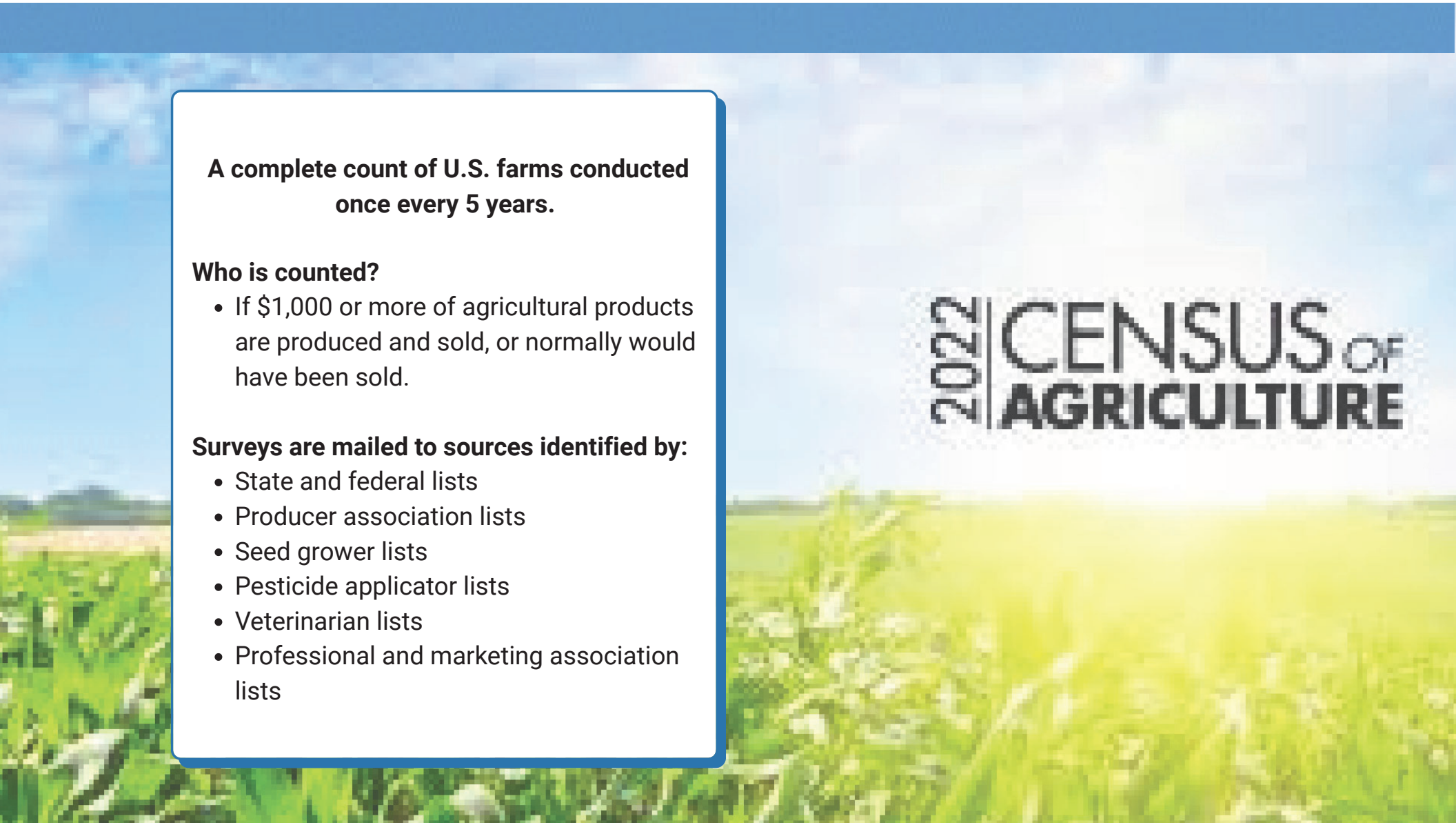
- Access to Land and Water
- Market Conditions
- Weather and Climate
- Farming Practices
- Farmers - The backbone of our local food system

Section 1: Key Data
Section 2: Mechanisms of Influence and Barriers
Section 3: Strategic Entry-Points for Change

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Section 1: Data



A complete count of U.S. farms conducted once every 5 years.

Who is counted?

- If $1,000 or more of agricultural products are produced and sold, or normally would have been sold.

Surveys are mailed to sources identified by:

- State and federal lists
- Producer association lists
- Seed grower lists
- Pesticide applicator lists
- Veterinarian lists
- Professional and marketing association lists



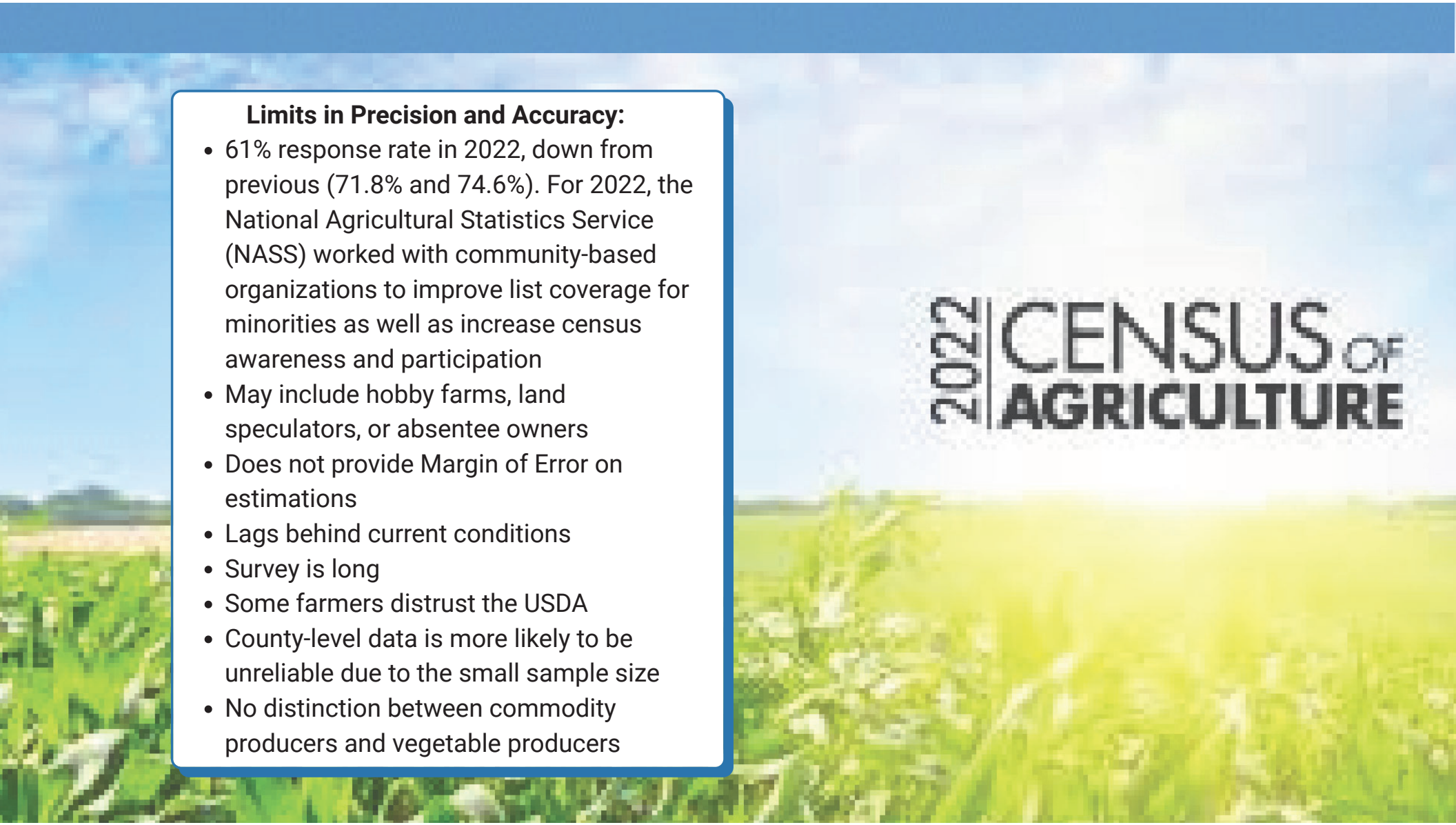
Key USDA Definitions:

"Farm" is defined by management, not just ownership.

- Landlords who don't actively farm are not counted as farm operators in the Census, even though they own agricultural land.

- If a producer owns or manages several parcels, the Census counts those as one farm.
- One farm can also span multiple counties.

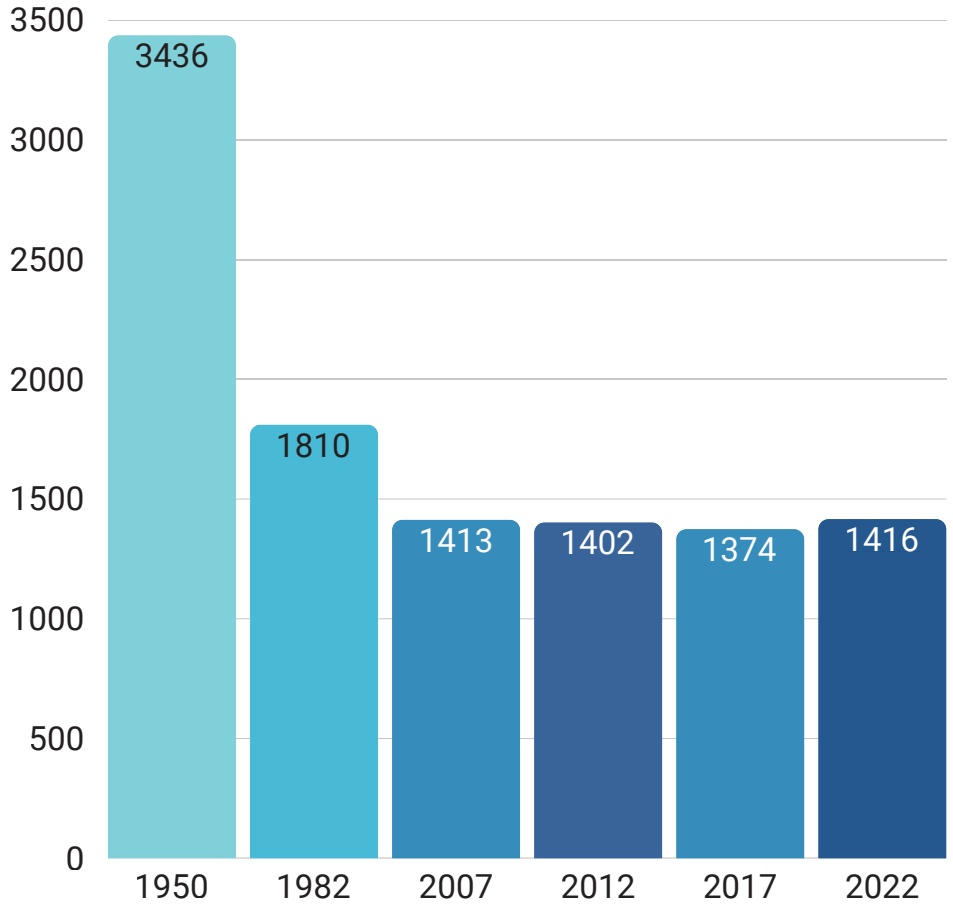
Farm ≠ parcel counts

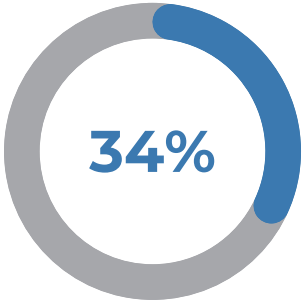


Limits in Precision and Accuracy:

- 61% response rate in 2022, down from previous (71.8% and 74.6%). For 2022, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) worked with community-based organizations to improve list coverage for minorities as well as increase census awareness and participation
- May include hobby farms, land speculators, or absentee owners
- Does not provide Margin of Error on estimations
- Lags behind current conditions
- Survey is long
- Some farmers distrust the USDA
- County-level data is more likely to be unreliable due to the small sample size
- No distinction between commodity producers and vegetable producers

Number of Farms, 2022



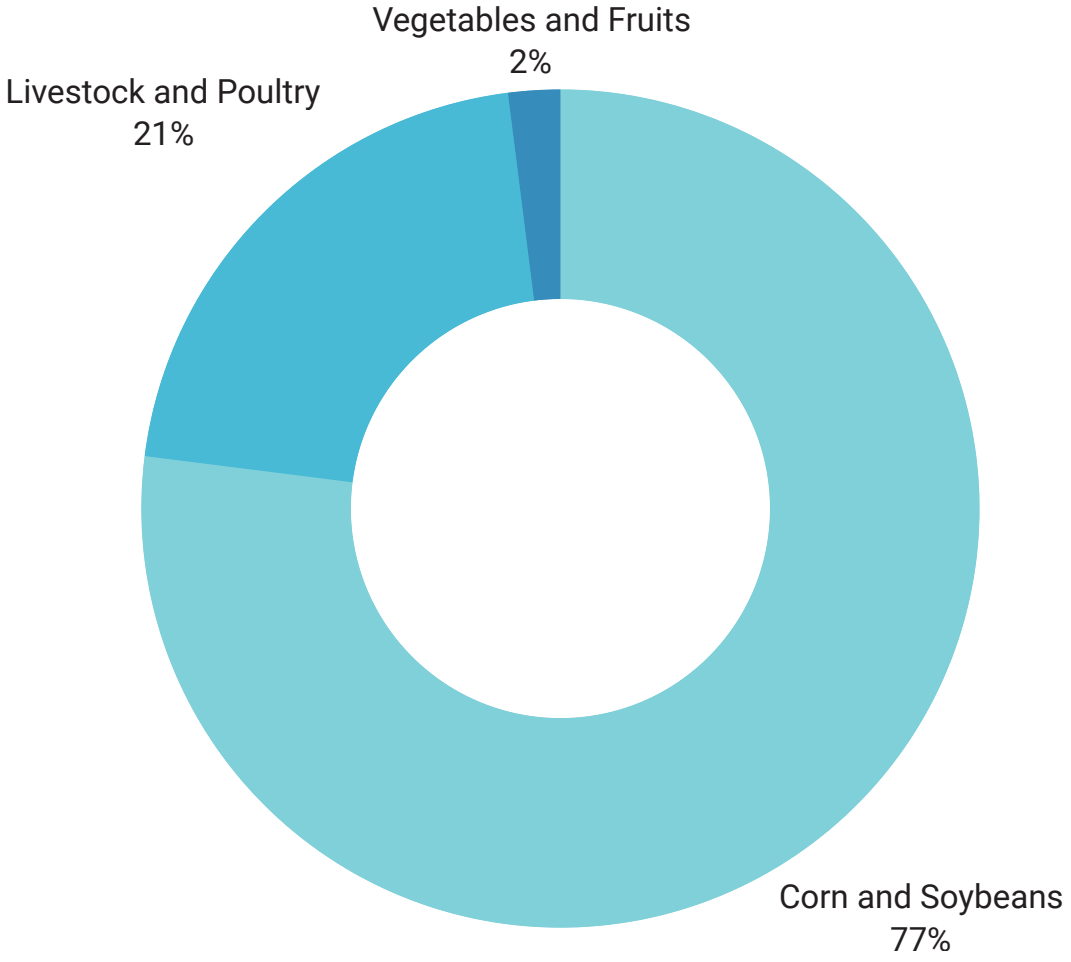


Farms Rented or Leased
167,685 Acres
(49% of acreage)

Cropland idle or used for cover crops/soil improvement (not pastured/harvested)
270 farms
14,162 acres

Other pasture and grazing land that could have been used for crops without additional improvements
99 farms
4,175 Acres

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture



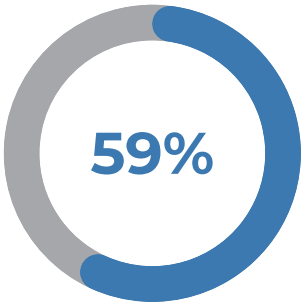
Land Use 2022

Number of Acres
338,977

Up 1% since 2007

Average Size of Farm
239 Acres

Down 12% since 2007

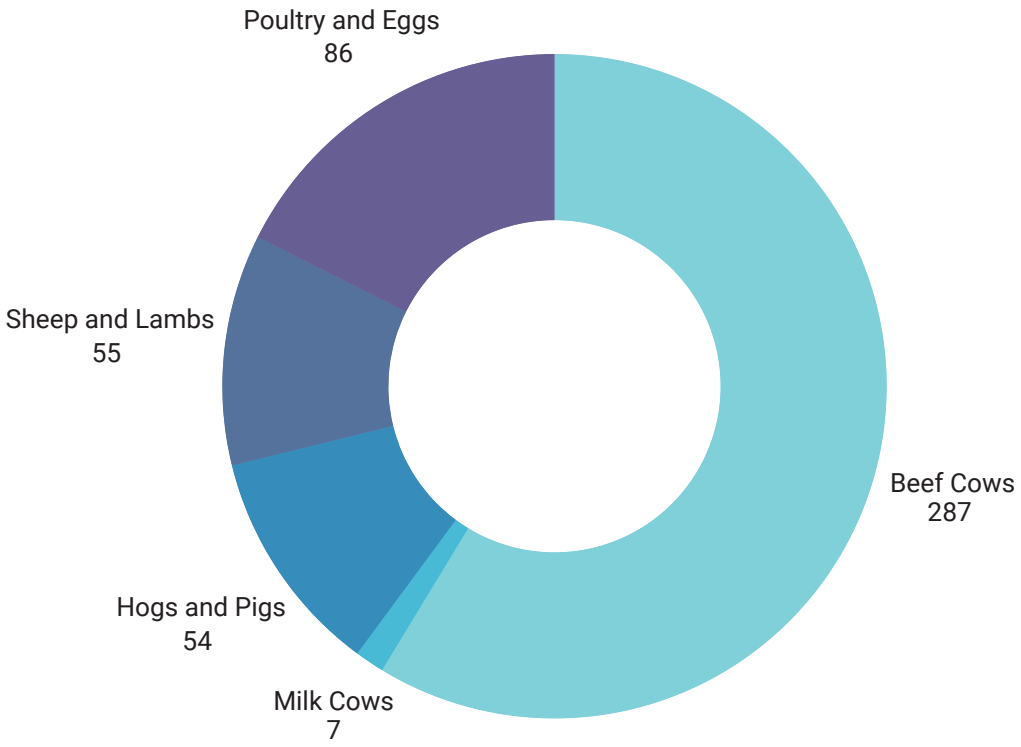


Farms less than 179 Acres

69% in 2017

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Livestock and Poultry, Number of Farms, 2022



Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Oats Produced, 2022

- 17 farms
- 1,100 Acres
- 21,600 bushels
- 83.1 bushels per acre
- State average 80 bushels per acre



Source: USDA 2023 Oats County Estimate

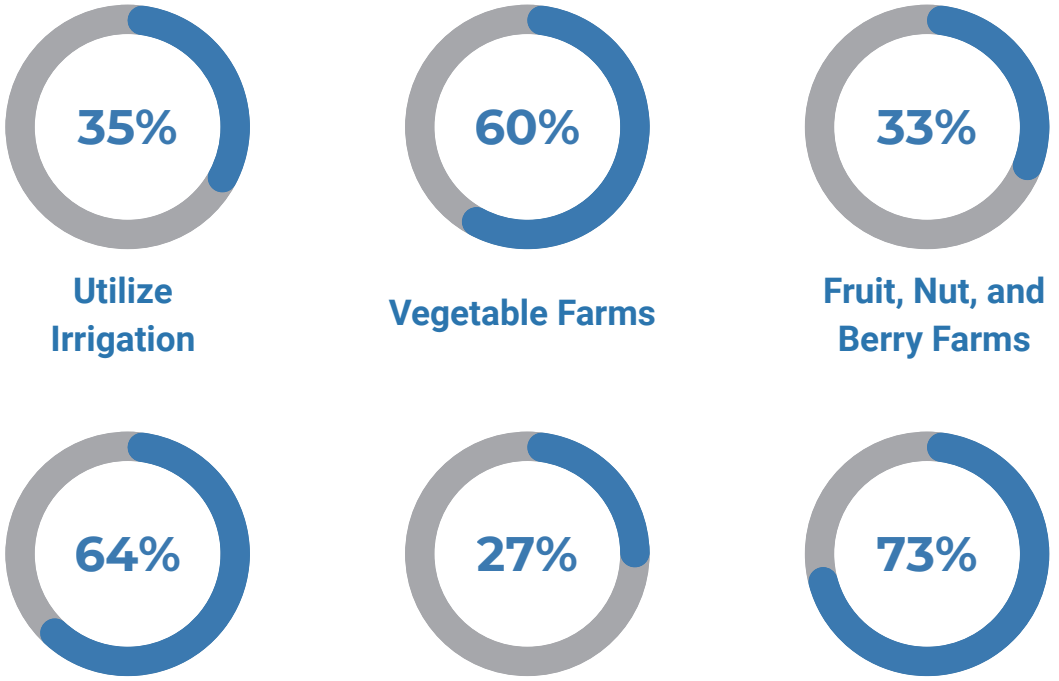
Irrigation, Water Quantity and Quality

Less than 1% of All Linn County Farms Are Irrigated: 57 Farms Totaling 843 Acres

Linn County sits atop bedrock aquifers that are described the U.S. Geological Survey as high capacity. The presence of a capable aquifer means water supply is not necessarily a limiting factor, but infrastructure cost (well drilling, pumping, equipment, irrigation systems) and regulations are critical to assess.

The county approved funding for three studies this year to learn more about current water quality, available surface and groundwater resources, and aquifer management and will utilize the findings to develop the Linn County Comprehensive Water Quality Management and Mitigation Plan.

Food Crop Producers, Iowa 2023

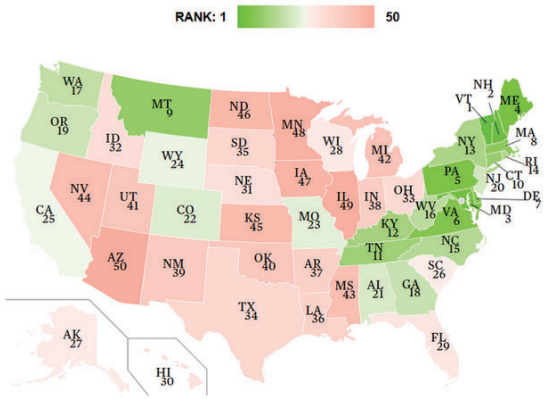


Source: 2023 Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crops Survey Source and US Census of Agriculture, 2022

Conservation Practices

Iowa Ranks 47th in the U.S. for Conservation Practices based upon the following indicators:

- Ratio of acres with no-till to conservation or conventional tillage
- Percentage of crop acres using cover crops
- Percentage of farms using rotational or management-intensive grazing
- Percentage of farms using alley cropping or silvopasture
- Percentage of farmland under conservation easement
- Percentage of farmland managed with organic practices
- Percentage of select animal products produced using organic management.



Research shows that agricultural practices based on ecological principles can make farms more sustainable without sacrificing profits.

Land Enrolled in Conservation Reserve, Wetlands Reserve, Farmable Wetlands, or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs in Linn County

2017
Farms: 389
Acres: 10,999

2022
Farms: 420
Acres: 12,651

Source: Union of Concerned Scientists (MIT) 50-State Food System Scorecard: Ranking the States on Farm and Food Health, June 2018 Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Vegetables Harvested for Sale

	Number of Producers 2017	Number of Producers 2022
Beets	4	12
Broccoli	5	8
Cabbage	6	13
Carrots	5	17
Eggplant	3	11
Garlic	3	14
Herbs	3	14
Kale	4	14
Onions	5	13
Peppers, Bell	8	21
Potatoes	9	18
Snap Beans	9	3
Squash	8	10
Sweet Corn	16	12
Tomatoes	8	13

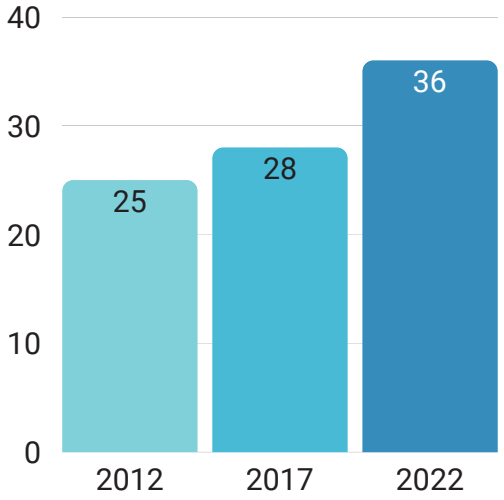


Source: US Census of Agriculture

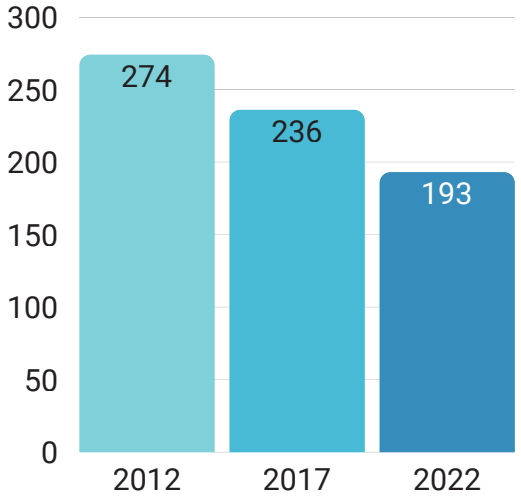
Vegetable Production

Number of Acres per Farm, 2022
30 Farms 0.1 to 4.9 Acres
4 Farms 5.0 to 24.9 Acres
2 Farms 25 to 99 Acres

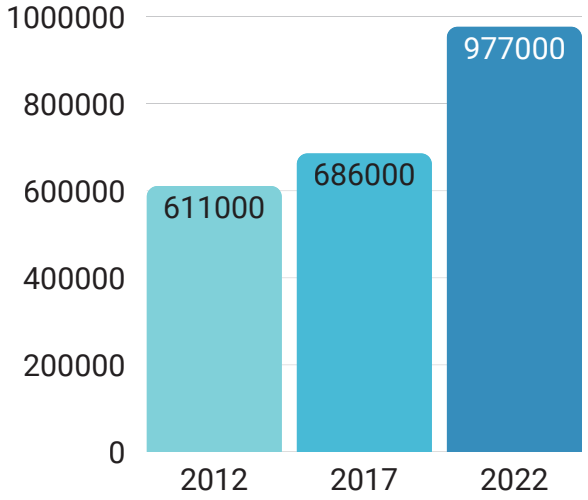
Number of Farms



Number of Acres



Sales



Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Top Vegetable Producing Counties in Iowa

	2022		2017		
County	Farms	Acres	Farms	Acres	Population
Polk	46	396	43	403	492,401
Johnson	43	141	42	185	152,854
Linn	36	193	28	236	230,299
Warren	36	101	32	88	52,403
★ Mitchell	35	188	19	284	10,565
Dallas	32	346	36	304	99,678
Story	29	104	31	75	98,537
Winneshiek	29	48	30	54	20,070
Scott	26	37	25	48	174,669
Dubuque	26	53	19	27	99,266

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture, US Decennial Census 2020

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Fruits and Nuts Harvested for Sale

	Number of Producers 2017	Number of Producers 2022
Apples	11	37
Nuts	0	8
Berries	8	22

Land in Orchards

	2017	2022
Farms	19	50
Acres	42	149

44 Farms
0.1 to 4.9 acres

6 Farms
5 to 24.9 acres

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture



Production Gap

Based on the USDA recommendation of consuming 2.5 cups of vegetables per day/adult =
475 pounds of vegetables per person/year

Population of 231,762 = 110 million pounds of vegetables per year
Assuming 25,000 lbs/acre/year marketable yield =
4,400 acres of vegetable crops are needed to feed Linn County residents

Production Goal: 4,400 Acres
Current Production: 193 Acres
Deficit: 4,207 Acres

Currently, only 12,650 acres of farmland in Iowa is dedicated to the production of fruits or vegetables, a **deficit of 48,929 acres**.

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Farms by Value of Sales

Excluding Government Payments

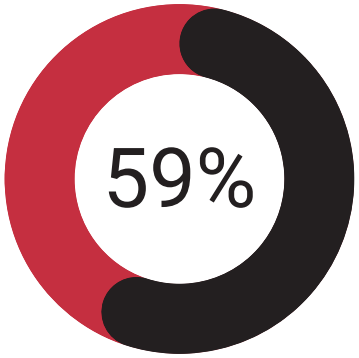
	2012	2017	2022
Less than $2,500	**28%**	**31%**	**25%**
$2,500 to $4,999	6%	6%	5%
$5,000 to $9,999	7%	7%	7%
$10,000 to $24,999	10%	10%	10%
$25,000 to $49,999	10%	9%	8%
$50,000 to $99,999	9%	9%	9%
$100,000 or more	**30%**	**28%**	**36%**

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

- Farm earnings can vary widely due to yields, prices, and costs, which are magnified on smaller farms. A single weather event can flip sales from "some" to "none."
- **Mid-size operations may blend crops or livestock creating more stable returns.**
- Large farms are exposed to commodity price cycles, creating large swings in gross and net income.



2022
Farms with Net Gain
Average: $167,598
Average Net Loss:
$24,023



2017
Farms with Net Gain
Average $87,851
Average Net Loss;
$25,167

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Share of Businesses Reporting Net Loss By Industry Nationwide:

Farming: 40%
Manufacturing: 18%
Construction: 22%
Restaurants: 28%
Retail Trade: 23%
Corporations: 25%

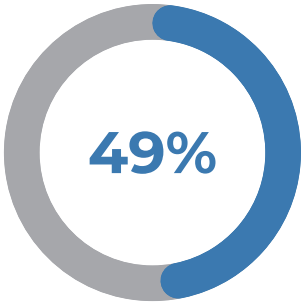
Source: US Internal Revenue, Statistics of Income/USDA ERS

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Federal Government Payments

$12,548,000

Total Government Payments in Linn County, 2022

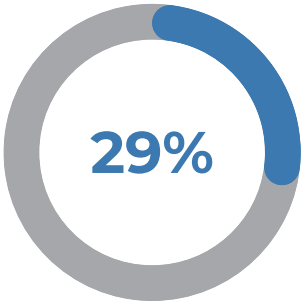


Receive Government Payments - Down 12% from 2017

Average per Farm, 2022: $17,977
Average per Farm 2017: $8,872

In 2022, the top 10% of recipients were paid 49% of all USDA subsidies in Linn County.

$2,622,000
Total Conservation Program Payments in Linn County, 2022

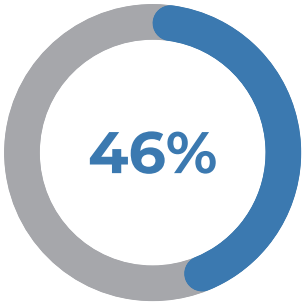


Receive Payments from Conservation Reserve, Wetlands Reserve, Farmable Wetlands, and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs
Up 2% from 2017

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture, EWG Farm Subsidy Database

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Federal Government Payments



Participate in Crop Insurance Programs

2017
Farms: 609
Acres: 249,937

2022
Farms: 657
Acres: 259,609

Federal Government Subsidies Received in Iowa
1995 - 2024
$43,455,083,023

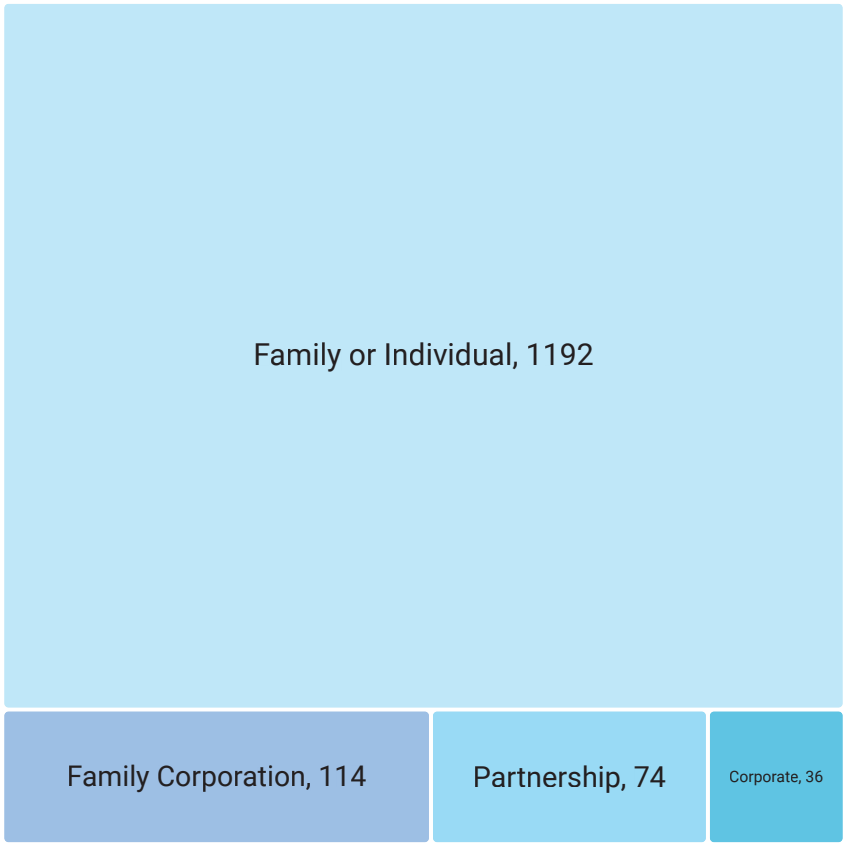
8.1% of All Federal Payments
2nd In the Nation

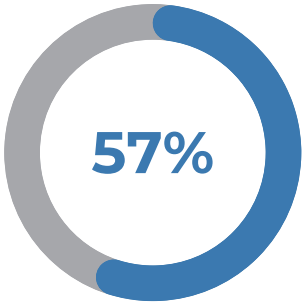
Linn County Received
$446,000,000
1%
49th in Iowa

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture, EWG Farm Subsidy Database

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Legal Status and Operation Characteristics, 2022





Producers with "other" primary occupation

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Farms By Value, 2022

	Number of Farms	Percentage of Farms
$1 to $49,999	42	3%
$50,000 to $99,999	41	3%
$100,000 to $199,000	73	5%
$200,000 to $499,000	324	23%
$500,000 to $999,000	276	19%
$1,000,000 to $1,999,999	235	17%
$2,000,000 to $4,999,000	204	14%
$5,000,000 to $9,000,000	131	9%
$10,000,000 or more	90	6%

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Average Per Farm Net Cash Income

- 2022 $100,612
- 2017 $41,611

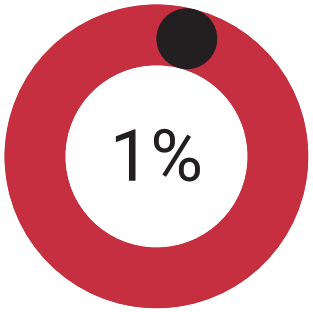
Average Per Farm Production Expenses

- 2022 $201,857
- 2017 $136,407

Linn County Agriculture Land Sales

	Number of Parcels Sold	Number of Acres Sold
2015	12	559
2016	31	1,989
2017	41	1,506
2018	44	1,673
2019	49	1,870
2020	55	2,091
2021	59	4,196
2022	57	1,867
2023	25	1,163
2024	38	1,445

Source: Linn County Assessor



LESS than 1% of land zoned for agricultural use is for sale each year in Linn County.

In 2014
9% of Owners Planned to Transfer Acres in the Next Five Years.
(USDA NASS, 2014 Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land Survey)
New survey conducted in 2024/anticipated release late 2025.

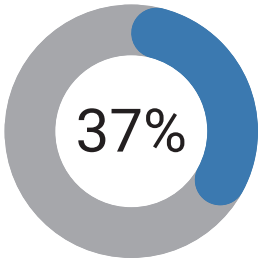
Land Currently Held in Trust
3,259 parcels/93,128 acres
27% of Agricultural Land

Out-of-State Trust
245 parcels/7,412 acres

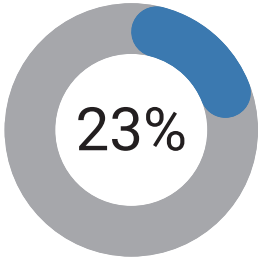
Out-of-Corridor Trust
213 Parcels/6,760 Acres

Last Sale >30 years ago
56 Parcels/1,631Acres

Source: Linn County Assessor



Land in Iowa owned for family or sentimental reasons.



Land in Iowa owned as a long-term investment.

The trend of farmland acquisition between 2017 and 2022 saw a decrease through purchase and an increase in inherited land in Iowa.

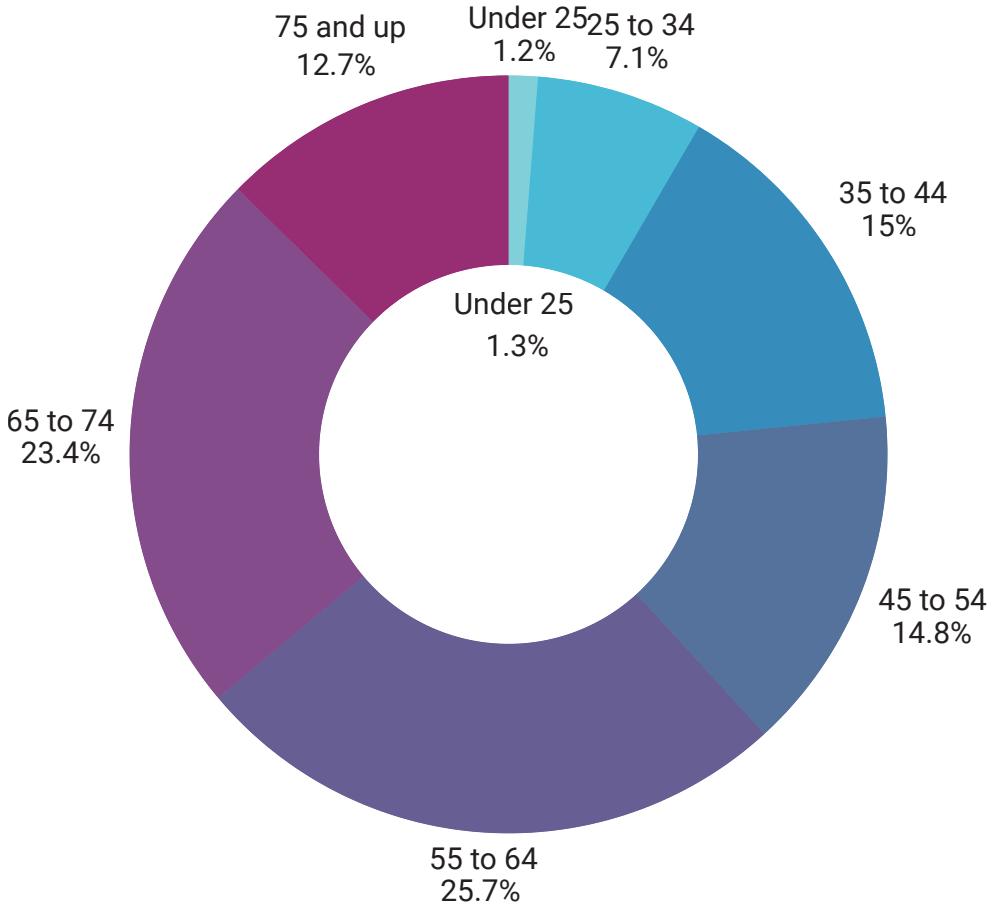
Source: Iowa State University, AG Decision Maker, Farmland Value Surveys

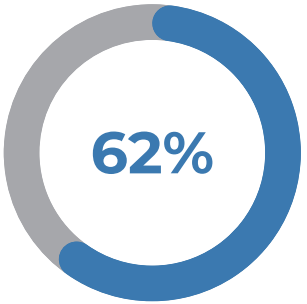
Access to land is the number one challenge facing the next generation of farmers in the U.S. (National Young Farmers, 2023)

Other Barriers:

- **High Startup Costs**
- **Lack of Market Access for Products**
- **Difficulty Accessing USDA Loans and Programs**

Age of Producers, 2022





Producers over age 55

New and Beginning Producers

744
15% Acres

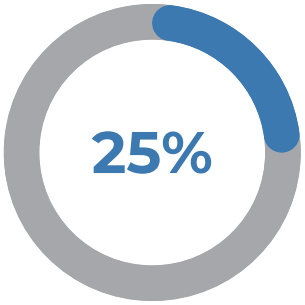
23%
Since 2017



63% Male 37% Female

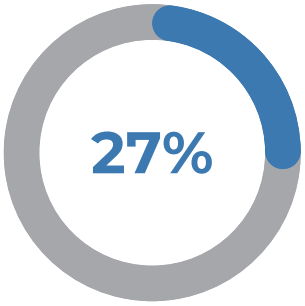
Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Farm Labor



Hire Farm Labor
7% Hire Contract Labor

2024 Median Pay:
$35,980 per year
$17.30 per hour



Farms with Unpaid Workers: 383
Number of Workers: 878

23.1
Average Years on Present Farm

Years Operating Any Farm

- **5 or less: 285**
- **6 to 10: 459**
- **11 years or more: 1,832**

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Agricultural Workers

Food Crop Producer Characteristics - Iowa

The USDA Census of Agriculture surveys all producers, combining responses from commodity crop growers with food crop growers.

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach partnered with Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to specifically survey commercial food crop growers.

A paper survey was sent to 3,557 growers identified by the NASS in January 2024.

1,827 unique responses were received for a response rate of 51%.The **highest number of responses came from Polk County and Linn County.**

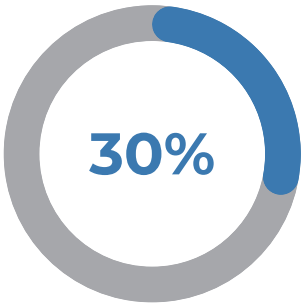
Survey questions were repeated from 1989, 2000, and 2015 with new categories added in 2023 which were developed with partners from:

- Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Office
- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)
- Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
- University of Iowa

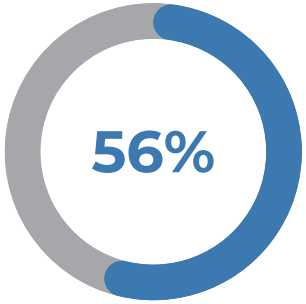
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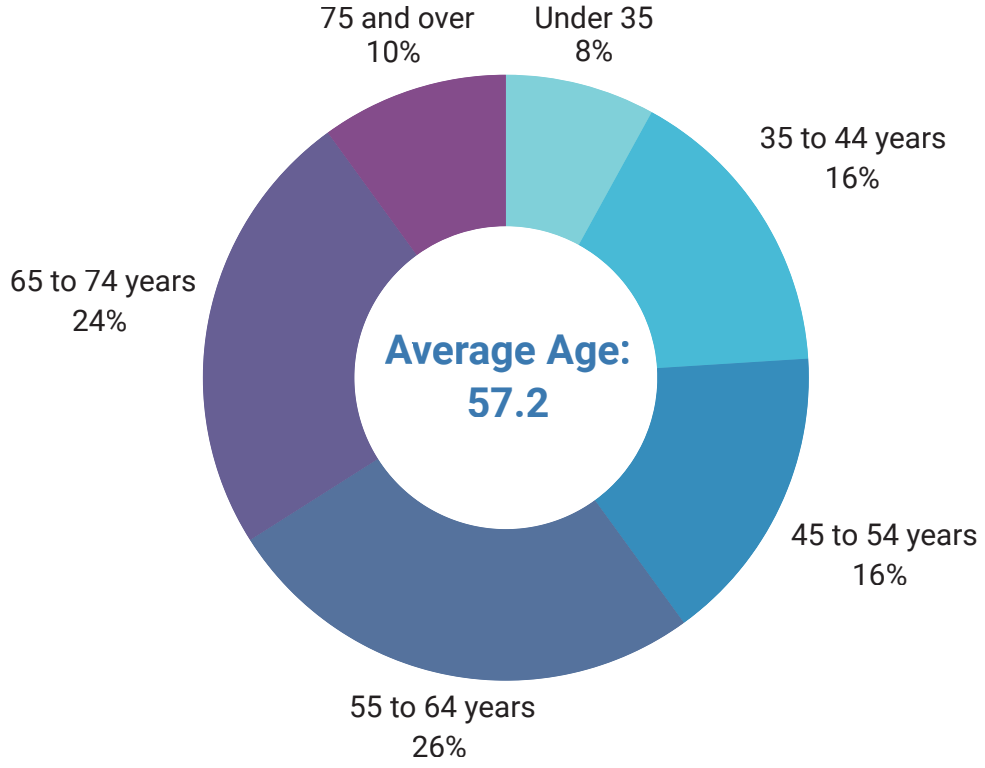
Food Crop Producer Characteristics, Iowa 2023



Beginning Farmers (compared to 27% for commodity crops)



Food crop farmers that have produced 10 years or less (compared to 28% for commodity crops)



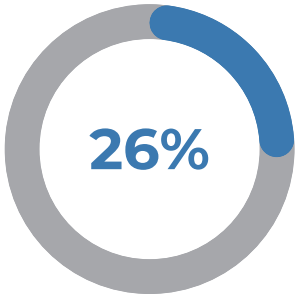
Source: 2023 Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crops Survey

Food Crop Producer Income and Labor, Iowa 2023

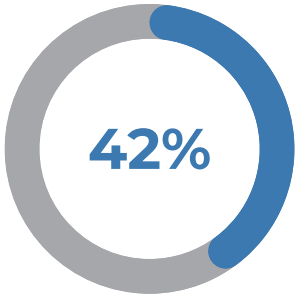
Percent of Household Income Derived from Sale of Edible Crops

	2000	2015	2023
1% or less	24%	40%	42%
2 to 5%	22%	17%	20%
6 to 10%	18%	13%	12%
11 to 20%	11%	10%	8%
21 to 40%	12%	10%	6%
41% to 70%	8%	6%	5%
71 to 100%	5%	4%	7%

43% of commodity producers do not have another primary source of income.



Utilized paid labor for less than 150 days (equivalent to commodity crops)



Utilized unpaid labor (compared to 27% of commodity crops)

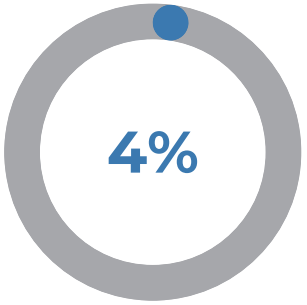
Source: 2023 Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crops Survey

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Food Crop Producer Risk Management

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many farmers view the record keeping requirements for obtaining crop insurance as burdensome, often requiring 5 years of yield data, a barrier for new farmers. Filing a claim for specialty crops is also considered less straightforward than for commodity crops. There may also be a lack of awareness among specialty crop producers that crop insurance is available to them. Others rely on crop diversity as a form of self-insurance, believing when one crop fails another is likely to thrive.

The USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) has indicated that specialty crops are a priority within the agency. Federal crop insurance coverage for specialty crops has grown steadily over the past 15 years. From just over $10 billion in 2005 to $18 billion in 2019 for specialty crops insurance.



Utilize crop insurance in comparison to 46% of commodity producers

Source: 2023 Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crops Survey

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Section 2: Mechanisms of Influence and Barriers



Mechanisms of Influence -
How the system steers production away from local food



Commodity Dominance

- 77% of Linn County farmland is corn and soybeans.



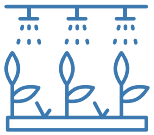
Land Tenure and Rental Patterns

- Roughly half of all agricultural acres are rented or leased.
- Only 1% of agricultural land is sold in a typical year, limiting access for new and diversified producers.



Federal Payments and Risk Management

Commodity producers received about $12.5 million in federal funding in 2022
The top 10% of recipients received 49% of all USDA subsidies.



Water and Irrigation Constraints

- Less than 1% of all Linn County farms use irrigation.
- Only 35% of food crop producers have the capacity to utilize irrigation.



Demographics of Producers

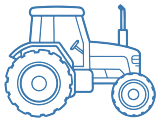
- 62% of producers are over age 55.
- “New and Beginning” producers control only 2.3% of agricultural acres making it hard to shift land into local food production.

Barriers -
What makes scaling local food difficult in Linn County



Small Farm Revenue and Costs

- Majority of producers earn less than $2,500 in annual sales.
- Average farm production expenses exceed net cash income for many operations, creating thin or negative margins.



Capital and Program Access

- Beginning farmers face high startup costs for land, water access, equipment, and other infrastructure.
- Difficulty accessing loans and support programs in a system designed around commodity operations.



Climate and Market Volatility

- Farm earnings can swing dramatically from year to year. A single weather event or price shift can move small farms from profit to loss, reinforcing risk aversion to specialty crops and local-market experimentation.



Buffer Zones

- Proximity to chemically treated commodity fields necessitates buffer zones, limiting usable acreage for food crops and increasing cost of production.

Section 3: Strategic Entry-Points for Change



Entry Points for Change -

Increase Access to Land For New and Beginning Farmers

- Partner with landowners holding acreage for legacy or investment purposes. Farmland is more likely to be inherited than purchased and 37% of agricultural land is owned for sentimental reasons.
- Offer multigenerational land transfer incentives and succession support.
- Offer incentives to the 99 Linn County farms that identified 4,175 acres of pasture or grazing land that could be used for crops without additional improvements.
- Create incentives for farmers to convert acreage to produce crops.

Improve Financial Viability for Small Farms

- Offer micro-grants and low-barrier financing for start-up costs.
- Pilot innovative risk mitigation strategies and insurance alternatives suited to specialty crops.
- Offer siting guidance for community gardens and small farms.
- Offer grants to offset the cost of developing irrigation systems.
- Identify fringe areas with access to water infrastructure to convert to farm land.

Increase Climate and Weather Resilience

- Support adoption of hoop houses and season extension tools which only 1 in 5 food producers currently utilize.

Key Metrics for Change:

Triple the number of acres in Linn County that are growing vegetables by 2030 from a 2022 baseline of 193 acres to 579 acres.

Triple the number of orchard acres in Linn County by 2030 from a 2022 baseline of 149 acres to 447 acres.

Part II: Processing and Distribution

Processing and Distribution is the infrastructure of our food system - the often hidden part of the food system that moves food from farm to fork that includes:

- Cleaning
- Storing
- Packaging
- Transporting
- Marketing

Section 1: Key Data
Section 2: Mechanisms of Influence and Barriers
Section 3: Strategic Entry-Points for Change

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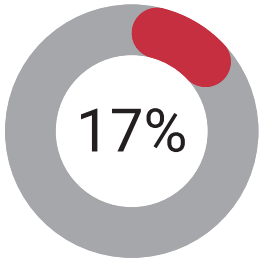


Section 1: Data

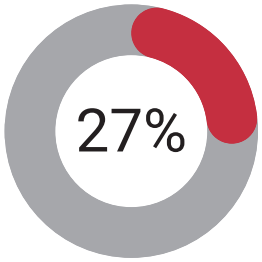
Farms with On-Site Packing Facility

2022	14
2017	3

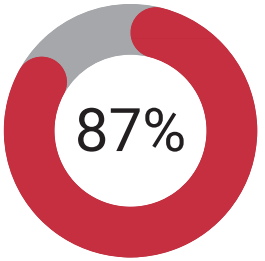
Farms That Do Not Own a Tractor



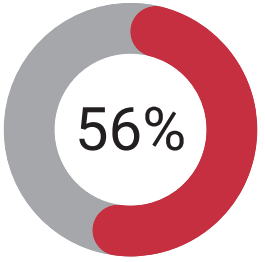
Farms with Barns Built Prior to 1960



Farms with Internet Access



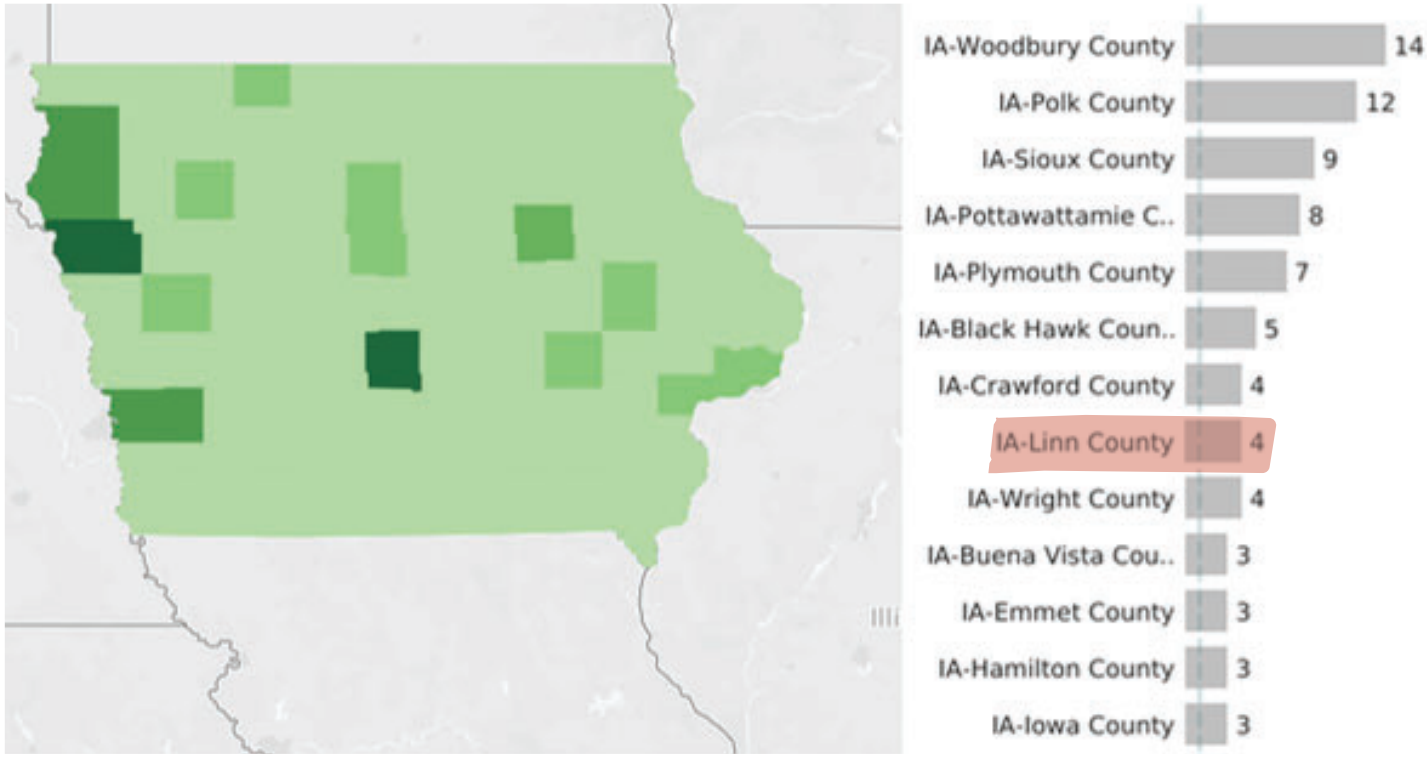
Farms with Broadband Access



Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

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Number of Meat Processors, Iowa, 2023



Source: Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Choose Iowa Butchery Innovation Grant 2024

23 grant requests submitted totaling over $1.5 million, indicated a strong interest and demand for meat processing facilities statewide.

$355,000 will leverage a combined investment of approximately $1.94 million across nine counties.

9 awardees will receive $20,000 to $100,000 and are required to provide a one-to-one financial match.

Food Marketing Practices, 2017 - 2022

	2017		2022	
	Number of Farms	Value	Number of Farms	Value
Food Sold Directly to Consumers	96	$640,000	87	$3,827,000
Food Sold Directly to Retail Markets, Institutions, or Food Hubs	11	$221,000	48	$991,000
Value Added Products Sold	15	$158,000	20	$2,508,000
Agritourism	7	$126,000	13	$60,000

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Direct-to-Consumer:

↑ 498%

Direct-to-Retail Institutions/Hubs:

↑ 348%

Value-Added Products:

↑ 1,487%

Food Marketing Practices: Top Vegetable Producing Counties in Iowa, 2017 - 2022

	Food Sold Directly to Consumers			Food Sold Directly to Retail Markets, Institutions and Hubs			Value Added Products Sold		
County	**2017**	**2022**	**%Change**	**2017**	**2022**	**% Change**	**2017**	**2022**	**% Change**
Polk	$1,067,000	$1,090,000	2%	$152,000	$114,000	**-25%**	$359,000	$290,000	**-19%**
Johnson	$2,234,000	$2,248,000	1%	$1,326,000	$957,000	**-27%**	$2,409,000	$2,236,000	**-7%**
Linn	$64,000	$3,827,000	**497%**	$221,000	$991,000	**348%**	$158,000	$2,508,000	**1,487%**
Warren	$377,000	$339,000	**-10%**	$392,000	$193,000	**-50%**	$765,000	$261,000	**-65%**
Mitchell	$645,000	$618,000	**-4%**	$64,000	$740,000	**1,056%**	$105,000	$24,000	**-77%**
Dallas	$192,000	$949,000	**394%**	$617,000	$36,000	**-94%**	$156,000	$273,000	75%
Story	$797,000	$1,170,000	46%	$240,000	$229,000	**-5%**	$944,000	$734,000	**-22%**
Winneshiek	$226,000	$314,000	38%	$104,000	$220,000	**111%**	$45,000	$109,000	**142%**
Scott	$253,000	$260,000	3%	$42,000	$147,000	**250%**	$87,000	$1,171,000	**1,245%**
Dubuque	$258,000	$235,000	**-9%**	Withheld	$314,000	N/A	$1,312,000	$130,000	**-90%**

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

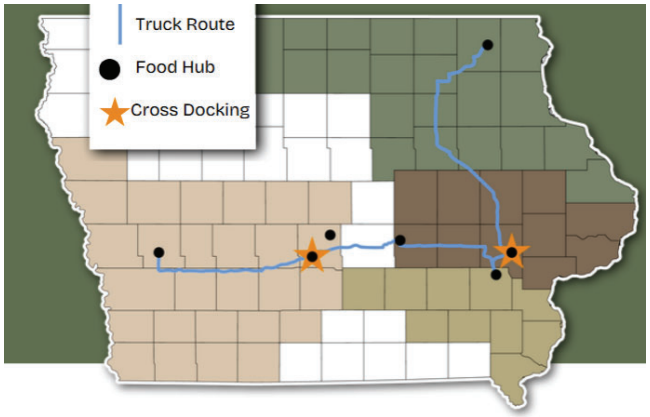
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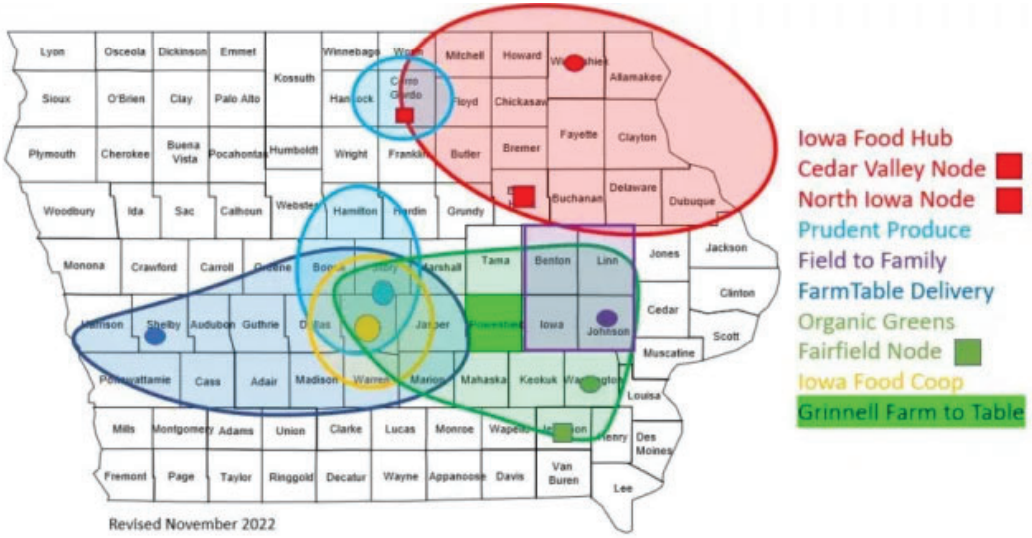
Iowa Food Hubs

Infrastructure like transportation and distribution networks are the backbone of the local food system.

Food hubs in Iowa provide aggregation, transportation, distribution, and marketing for food products from Iowa producers.

A truck route was established between 7 food hubs who cooperated to sell products to each other, filling in local production gaps, expanding local markets for Iowa farmers.





In 2024, 78 cents of every food hub dollar went to the producer.

Source: Iowa State Extension, Iowa Food Hub Directory and 2024 Impact Report

With the exception of Mitchell County, which experienced an increase of more than 1,000% in sales to retail markets, institutions and food hubs, Linn County outpaced Iowa's top vegetable-producing counties by a wide margin in growth between 2017 and 2022. Compared to statewide trends, direct-to-consumer food sales in Linn County grew 448% faster than Iowa overall, while sales of value-added products grew an impressive 1,458% faster. This exceptional expansion in food marketing practices reflects a strong alignment of local leadership through the Linn County Food Systems Council, and targeted investments in local food infrastructure. Coordinated efforts among nonprofits, institutions, and local governments - combined with renewed attention to local food systems following the 2020 derecho and COVID-19 pandemic - have helped position Linn County as a statewide leader in local food marketing practices. The county also benefits from a diverse and younger generation of producers who employ innovative marketing strategies to reach consumers and institutional buyers.

Although it was launched after the 2022 Agriculture Census, the Linn County Food Systems Council FARE grant program has further strengthened Linn County's local food infrastructure by expanding access to cold storage, distribution capacity, and other critical projects that support long-term food-system resilience.

LINN COUNTY
FOOD SYSTEMS COUNCIL
FOOD ACCESS, RESILIENCY, AND EQUITY
GRANT PROGRAM

FARE Grant Program - $250,000 Funded by American Rescue Plan Act

Food-related businesses and nonprofit organizations were eligible for grants from $1,000 to $25,000 to supported local food initiatives that increased food security through infrastructure development. Bulk food purchases were ineligible for funding. See below for details.

ECICOG

State of Iowa
Increase in Food Marketing Practices from 2017 to 2022

Direct-to-Consumer:

↑ **50%**

Direct-to-Retail Institutions/Hubs:

↑ **704%**

Value-Added Products:

↑ **29%**

Source: 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Food Access and Resiliency and Equity Program (FARE) Grant

Round 1	Amount of Award	Funded Activity
Black Earth Gardens	$15,000	Farm Truck
Echollective Farm	$10,000	Walk-In Cooler
Over the Moon Farm and Flowers	$20,000	Walk-In Freezer, Concrete Foundation and Shed
Growing Food for the African Community	$15,000	Tractor
United We March Forward	$7,000	Enclosed Trailer
Nupola's Emerging Farm	$15,000	Tractor and Tiller
Buffalo Ridge Orchard	$25,000	Fencing
Southeast Linn Community Center	$7,000	Two Professional Grade Ranges
Senior Grocery Delivery (Olivet)	$15,000	Delivery Van
Children of Promise	$1,300	Food Pantry Expansion
Marion Cares	$1,000	Refrigerator
Cathy Bayne	$1,000	Refrigerator



Food Access and Resiliency and Equity Program (FARE) Grant

Round 2	Amount of Award	Funded Activity
Local Harvest CSA	$20,000	Youth Farmer Training & Education
Rodale Institute-Midwest Organic Center	$16,000	Regenerative Vegetable Farming
Green Square Meals	$14,000	Commercial Refrigerator
Black Earth Gardens	$10,000	Tunnel and BCS
Southeast Linn Community Center	$10,000	Shed and Glass Door Refrigerator
Darius K Nupolu	$10,000	Farm Truck
Area Substance Abuse Council	$5,000	Refrigerator
Aroma Artisan Pizza, LLC	$5,000	Freeze Dryer
Grow At Kazimour Farm & Orchard	$5,000	Mowers and Rakes
Over the Moon Farm and Flowers	$5,000	Spray Foam Cooler
Marion Cares	$3,000	Crockpots and Class Supplies
Children of Promise Mentoring Program	$2,700	Nutrition Classes
Full Bowl	$2,500	Microgreen Stations and Commercial Refrigerator
United We March Forward	$2,500	Equipment, Transportation to Market
Matthew 25	$1,500	Billboard, Print Marketing Materials
Horizons	$1,300	Irrigation System
Marion Public Library Foundation	$1,000	Freezer and Insulated Totes

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Market Channels, Iowa 2015 to 2023

	2015	2023
On-Farm Sales	39%	41%
Farmers Market	43%	30%
Roadside Stand	8%	25%
Retail Store	14%	18%
Restaurant	4%	6%
Pick Your Own	4%	6%
Online Sales	1%	6%
Wholesale	8%	6%
CSA	6%	5%
Processor	15%	5%
Food Hub	5%	5%
Auction	9%	5%
Institutions	7%	6%
Other Grower	3%	4%

Source: 2023 Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crops Survey

Farmers market participation in Iowa decreased by 13%, while roadside stand sales grew by 17%. Because farmers markets require greater labor, transportation, and setup resources, some producers appear to be shifting toward less demanding outlets.

Online sales, another low-barrier marketing option, also increased by 5% during this period.



Advertising Methods, Iowa 2015 to 2023

	2015	2023
None	61%	85%
Social Media	25%	32%
Point of Sale Signage	28%	17%
Product Labeling	11%	12%
Website	11%	8%
Newspaper	15%	5%
Brochure	7%	4%
Radio	6%	3%
Other, TV, Email, Direct Mail, Events	18%	7%

In 2000 40% advertised in a newspaper.



Source: 2023 Iowa Commercial Horticulture Food Crops Survey



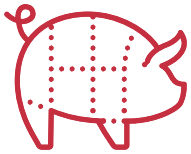
Section 2: Mechanisms of Influence and Barriers

Mechanisms of Influence -
How the system steers production away from local food



Market Structure and Sales Channels

- Marketing and consumer connections are not well supported. Producers have been slow to adopt to new technology with 85% of farms reporting they do no formal advertising.
- Local farmers markets do not support the sale of fresh produce and are more tailored towards arts and crafts.
- Local food channels with the highest visibility are also the most burdensome.



Infrastructure and Capacity

- Lack of meat processors discourages farm diversification potential.
- Without processing, packing, and cold storage access, producers are structurally directed toward commodity channels rather than food production.
- Lack of financing mechanisms for small, emerging, or beginning food producers.



Regional Distribution Systems

- Linn County is geographically in-between two hubs and not well supported.
- Local distribution systems were built for commodities or long distances.
- Capital investments reinforce large, commodity oriented operations.



Labor Shortages

- Workers from one end of the food chain to the other are the poorest paid employees in society (UC Berkeley Labor Center).
- 86% of jobs in the U.S. food system offer wages at or below the poverty level (Food Chain Workers Alliance).

Barriers -
What makes scaling local food difficult in Linn County



Limited Low-Cost, Low-Barrier Market Access

- Farmers markets require labor, logistics, and setup burdens contributing to declining participation. Many producers have resorted to setting up roadside stands.
- Producers face scaling constraints when selling to institutions or retail - volume, consistency, and compliance.



Limited and Outdated Infrastructure

- Very few farms have on-site packing facilities with no mobile options.
- 27% of barns in Linn County were built before 1960, indicative of aging infrastructure.
- Lack of access to coolers, freezers, tractors.
- Only 56% of farmers have broad-band access necessary to apply for funding and access markets.



Demographics of Producers

- 56% of food crop farmers have produced 10 years or less (compared to 28% for commodity crops).



Section 3: Strategic Entry-Points for Change

Entry Points for Change

Remove regulatory barriers for new food businesses including clarifying cottage food laws.

Explore how a central kitchen or food processing facility can serve Linn County.

Scale food hub collaboration. Enhance participation with the Iowa Food Hub inter-hub truck route.

Pilot workforce certification programs in food safety and processing.

Consider incentives for grocers/retailers/restaurants to buy locally sourced food.

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
Pilot Mobile Processing Unit

ISU has developed a pilot program utilizing a small-scale mobile cart that will process fruits and vegetables. The small-scale processing unit is compact enough for independent grocers to affordably add value to their fresh produce by chopping, dicing, and slicing fruits and vegetables on site. A full-scale trailer-sized model will be developed in the second phase to broaden the capacity and accommodate farm-scale processing making it easier for local growers to get value-added products to market.

Michigan State University
Mobile Food Processing Lab

Offers a certificate program in Food Processing, Technology, and Safety that trains students on the processes and technologies used to convert crops into consumable food products. The mobile processing lab is part of the program, providing hands-on experiences.
www.canr.msu.edu/iat/certificate_program/mobilelab

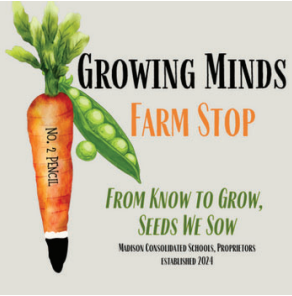


Entry Points for Change

Growing Minds Farm Stop
Madison Consolidated High School Career and Technical Education Capstone Program
Madison, Indiana

The Growing Mind Farm Stop is a student-run, non-profit daily market that partners with local farmers to bring fresh local foods to the community. Students developed the business plan, are part of the ongoing renovations, select vendors and farmers and supervise the hiring of student staff and day-to-day operations.

For more information:
https://www.madison.k12.in.us/about/growing-minds-farm-stop



Circle C Market
Cody-Kilgore Jr/Sr High School
Cody, Nebraska
Population: 170

Circle C Market is a student-run daily market that has been called the heartbeat of the community. After 6 years of planning, grant writing, and hard work by the students, the store opened in 2013. The project secured a 99-year lease on land owned by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and embarked on constructing a 3,500 sq-ft building using straw-bale insulation and student labor. The students handle all day-to-day operations gaining rural business and entrepreneurship skills. The store offers a full range of grocery items with fresh, local produce and local artisan goods.



Entry Points for Change

Linn County Supports Local Foods!

The landing page for Mercy Cedar Rapids Food and Nutrition Services provides a testimony for the many benefits of local foods and an example of how institutions can help change how we think about local foods.



"According to Press Ganey, Mercy Medical Center Food & Nutrition Services ranks in the top 0.7% for patient satisfaction. Only 1 in 5 hospitals in the nation have achieved this ranking – and Mercy has achieved greater than 90% for 8 years in a row! How has Mercy achieved these scores? Mercy's Food & Nutrition Services department believes fresh foods are best. Supporting Local Farmers Mercy supports local Iowa farmers and community health by purchasing locally sourced fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy products."





Key Metrics for Change:

Double the number of farms with on-site packing facilities by 2030 from a 2022 baseline of 14 to 28.

Double the number of meat processing facilities in Linn County by 2030 from a 2022 baseline of 4 to 8.

Triple the percentage of producers who are marketing/advertising by 2030 from a 2023 baseline of 15% to 45%

Part III: Access

Access is dependent upon 4 variables:

Physical: Proximity and transportation to food stores

Financial: Resources sufficient to purchase food

Nutritional: Availability of foods that meet nutritional requirements

Cultural: Availability of culturally-relevant foods

Section 1: Key Data
Section 2: Mechanisms of Influence and Barriers
Section 3: Strategic Entry-Points for Change

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Section 1: Data

Food Access in Linn County

Transportation, financial resources, and the availability of healthy, culturally relevant foods are key factors that influence how people access food. In Linn County, the primary mechanisms through which residents obtain food include:

Market-Based: Traditional supermarkets are the primary access point. Alternatively, shoppers may access food directly from producers at a local farmers markets, online, or through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program where consumers pay a farm upfront for a share of the upcoming harvest, receiving a weekly box of produce throughout the season.

Assistance-Based: Federal assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC provide vouchers or EBT cards which may be used at participating retail outlets. For those who do not meet eligibility criteria there is a network of food pantries and mobile distributions facilitated through HACAP Food Reservoir which acts as a regional hub.

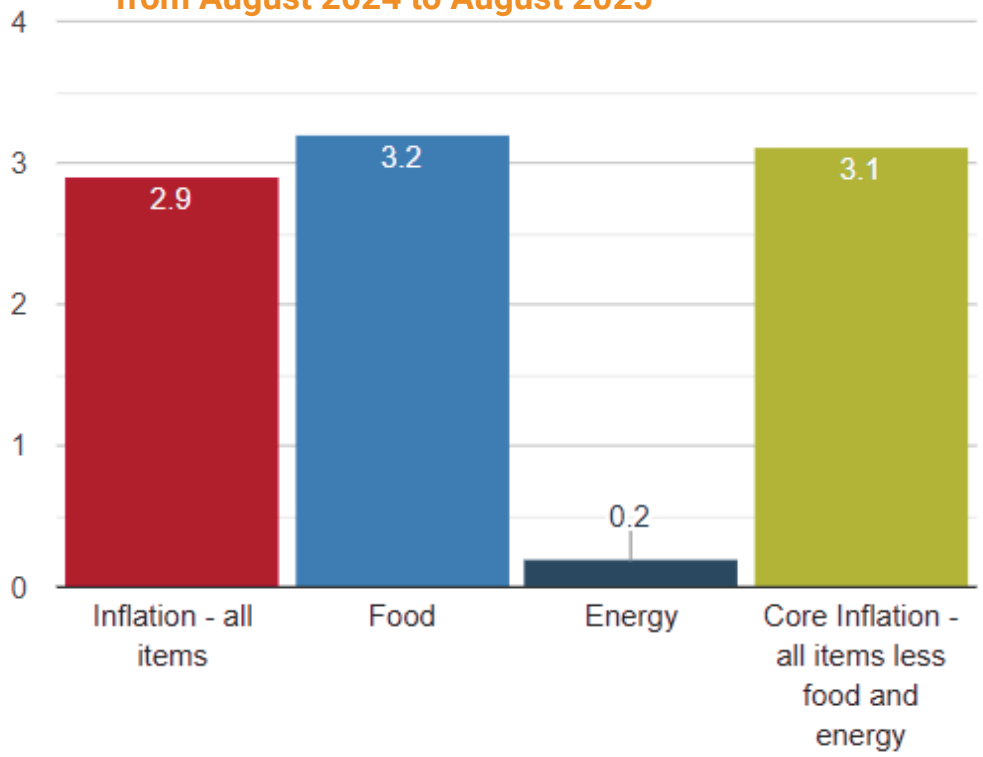
Institutional-Based: The Cedar Rapids Community School District serves approximately 15,000 meals per day for students. School lunch and breakfast are often primary food access points for students during the school year and often serve as food access nodes for lower -income households. Hospitals and other institutions are the primary food access point for patients and staff.

Self-Provisioning: Seasonally, some may access food from their own fruit and vegetable garden. Others may utilize community garden facilities and take part in Share a Row, a program managed by Linn County Master Gardeners who distributes donated fruits and vegetables from home gardens to local neighbors and pantries.

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U.S. Food Prices

Inflation Major Categories, 12-month percent increase from August 2024 to August 2025



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Food and Beverages in US

Forecast:

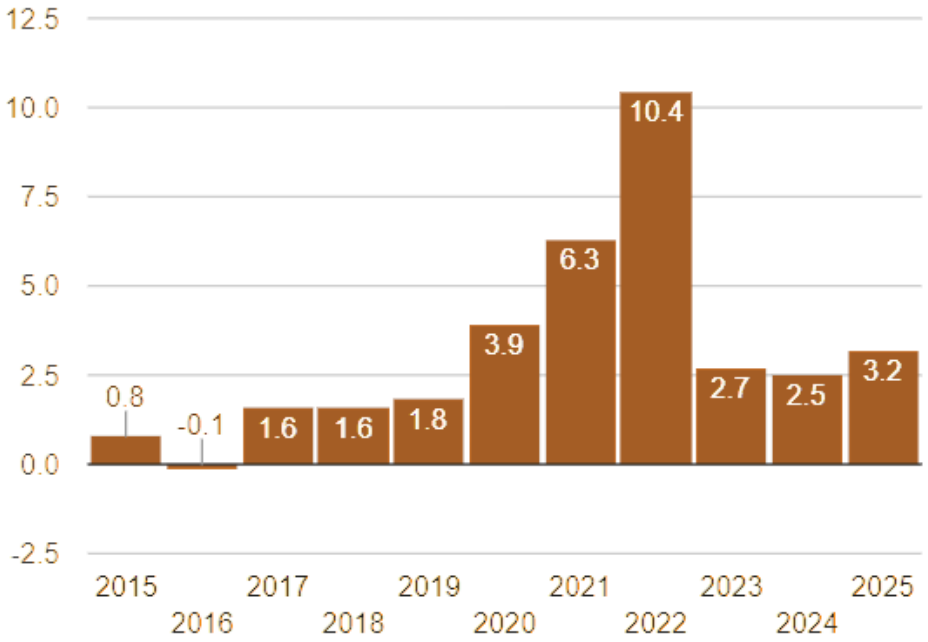
Food inflation likely to hover around 2.2% in 2025 with a prediction interval of -2.9% to 7.5% assuming no major shocks from commodity prices, tariffs, or supply disruptions due to natural disasters.

Fresh vegetables are predicted to decrease by 0.8% in 2025.

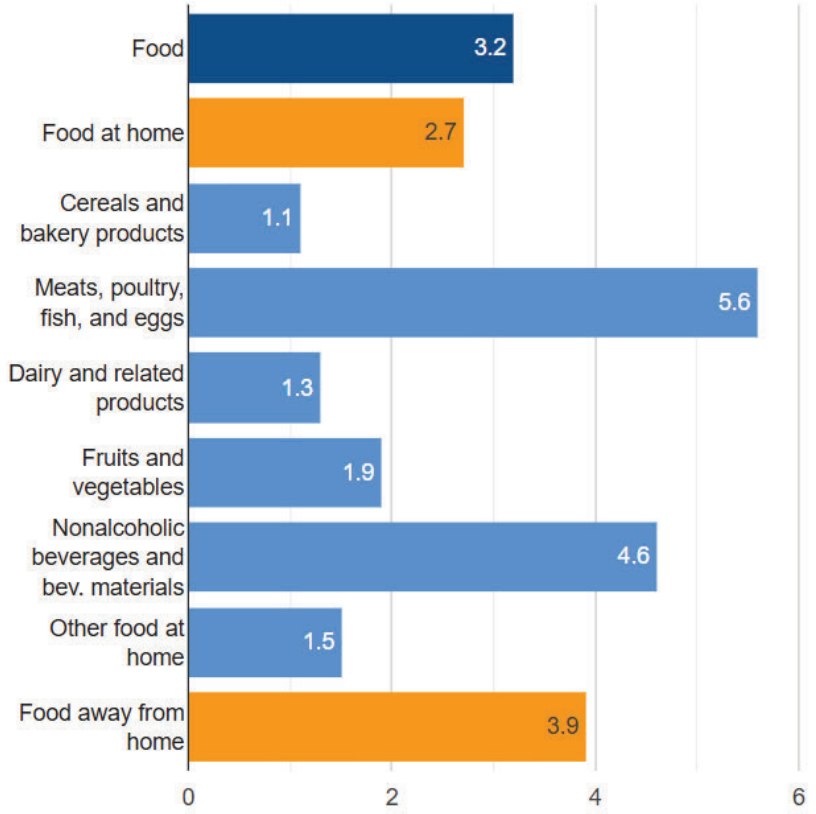
USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS) August 2025 Forecast

Market-Based

U.S. Food Inflation 2015 - 2025



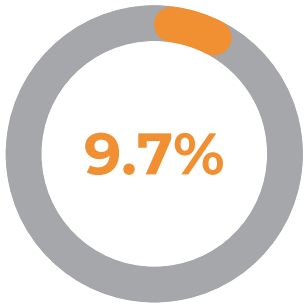
Major Food Category Expenditures, 12-month percent increase from August 2024 to August 2025



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Food and Beverages in US

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Food Insecurity



Linn County Residents Who Are Food Insecure
22,210 Adults
8,476 Children



9 out of 10 food-insecure counties are rural.



Food-Insecure Households Who Do Not qualify for SNAP

What is food insecurity?

When people do not have enough to eat and do not know where their next meal will come from.

Effects of Food Insecurity:

- More likely to experience chronic physical illness.
- More likely to experience depression, anxiety, and elevated levels of stress.
- Social Isolation.
- Difficulty concentrating at work or school.

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Source: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Purchase to Plate Suite, March 2023.

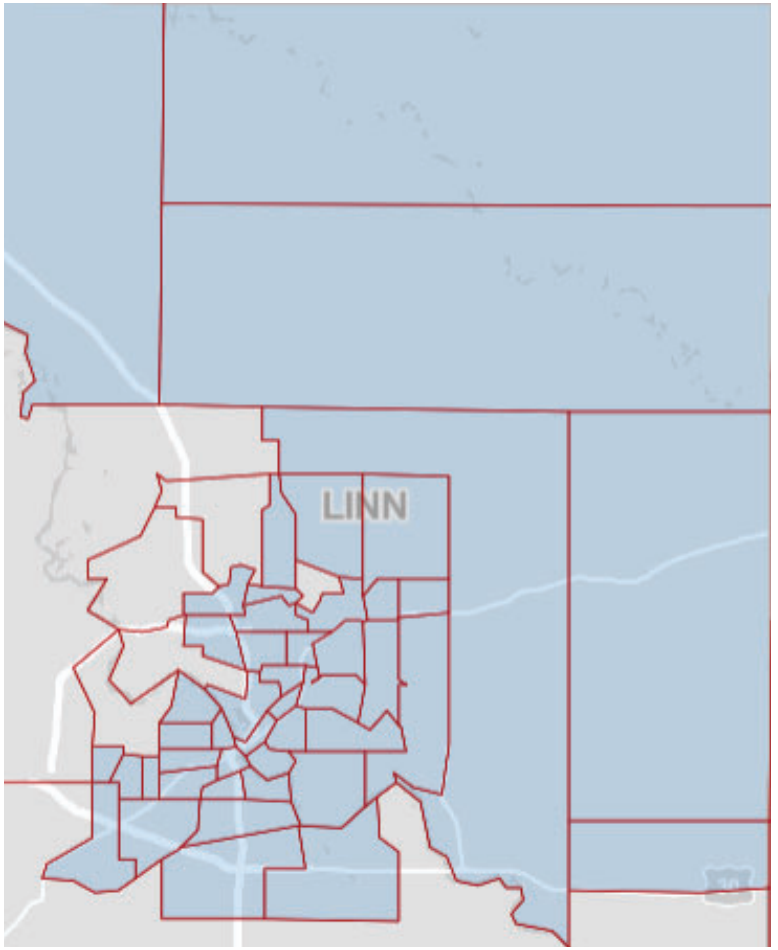
Source: Feeding America

Census Tracts With Food Insecurity Rates Above Average

Percentage of Population Food Insecure	Estimated Number of People Food Insecure
6.5% to 10%	3,780
9.9% to 11.9%	8,010
12% to 14.9%	7,250
15% to 23%	9,310

Linn County Residents Who Are Food Insecure By Census Tract 28,350

Source: USDA ERS Food Access and HACAP



Census Tracts With Highest Percentage of Residents Who Are Food Insecure

Census Tract 27
23.2%

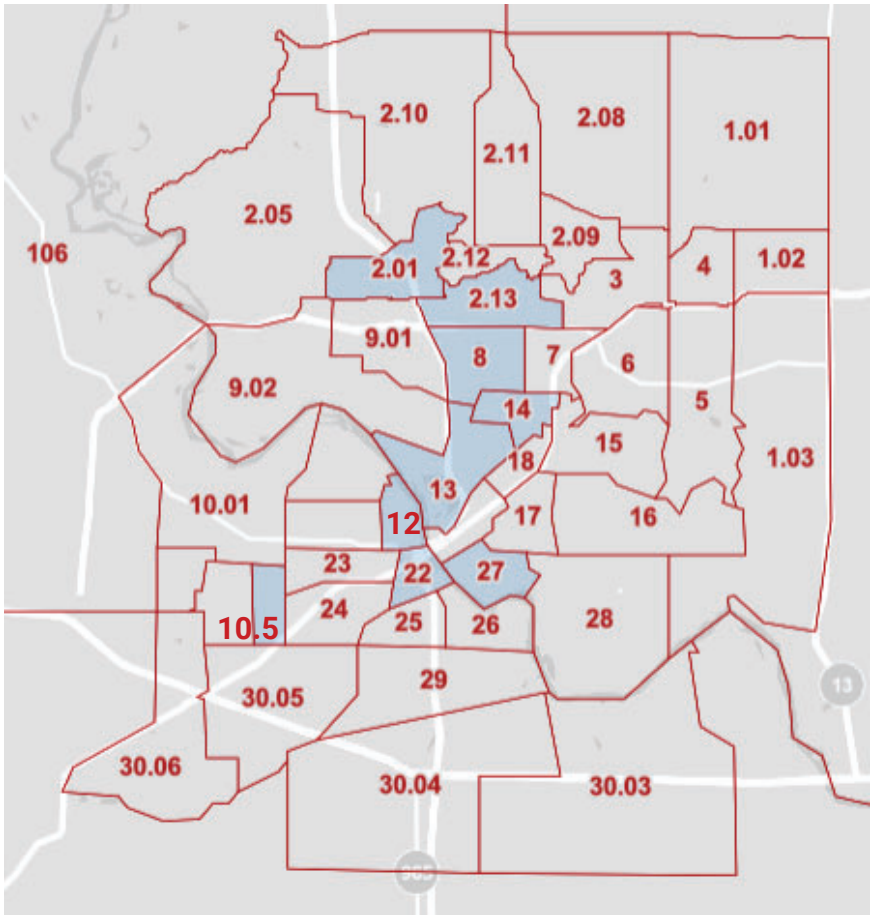
Census Tract 22
19.4%

Census Tract 2.13
18.3%

Census Tract 8 and 10.5
17.6%

Census Tract 12, 13 and 14
17%

These neighborhoods also have low access to food pantries.

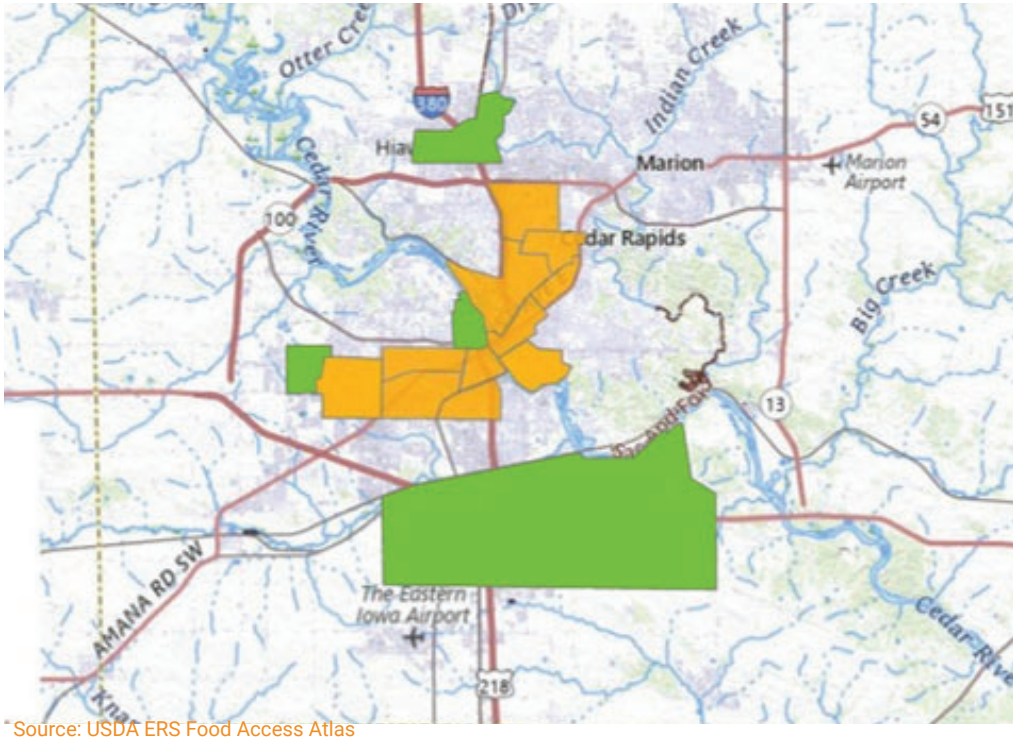


Source: USDA ERS Food Access Atlas and HACAP

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Food Deserts in Linn County by Census Tract, 2019

The USDA Food Access Atlas maps access to grocery stores by census tract, this does not include dollar stores, drug stores, or convenience stores



Source: USDA ERS Food Access Atlas

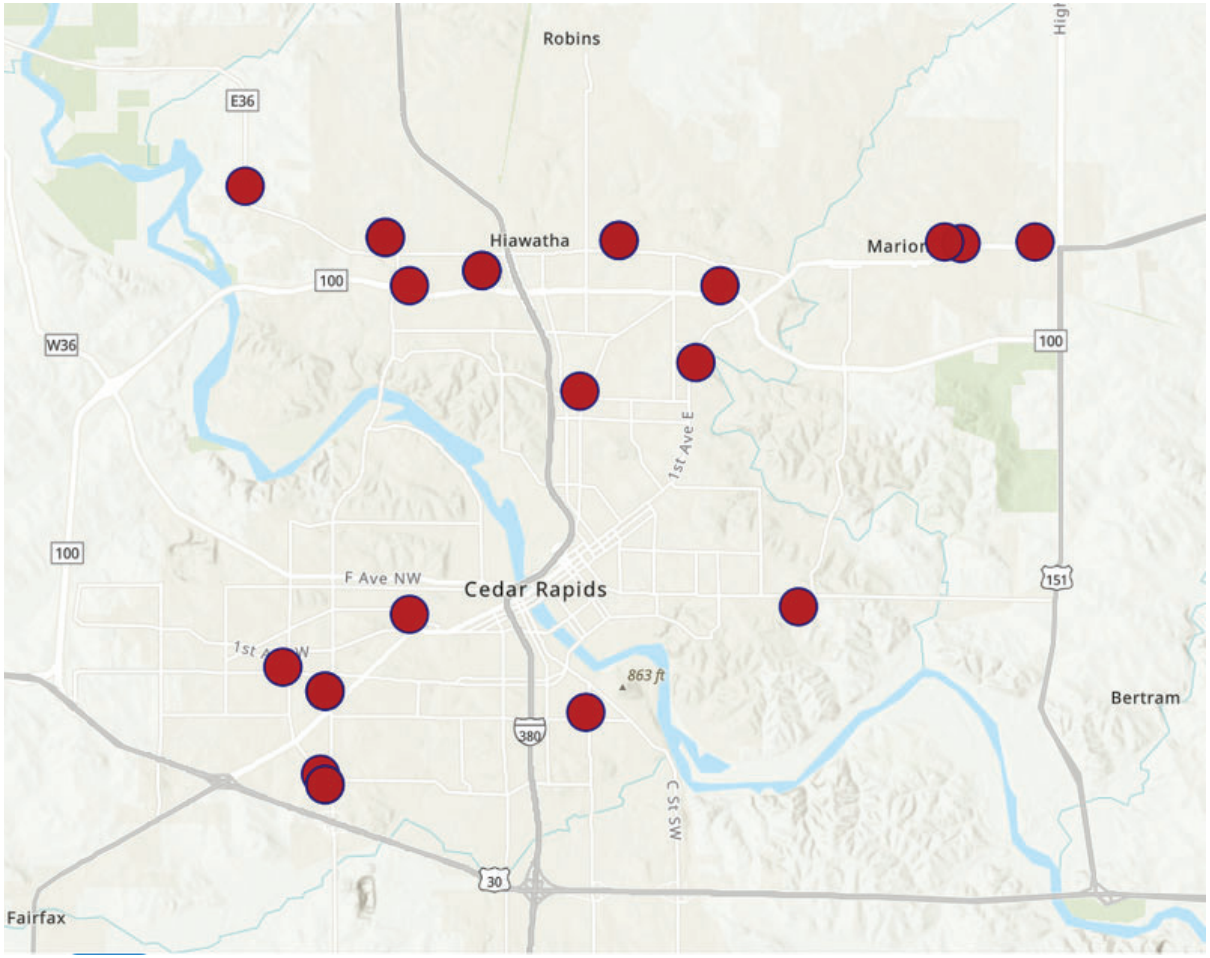
Low-income census tract where at least one-third of residents lives more than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket.
Census Tracts: 2.1, 10.02, 12, and 30.02.

Low income census tracts where, at lease one-third of residents live more than a ½ mild from a supermarket. Census Tracts: 8, 10.03, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 27.

Grocery Store Locations, Metro Area

The USDA Food Access Atlas has not been updated since 2019. A map of current grocery store locations shows locations are clustered to the North along Blairs Ferry Road and in the South along Williams Blvd.

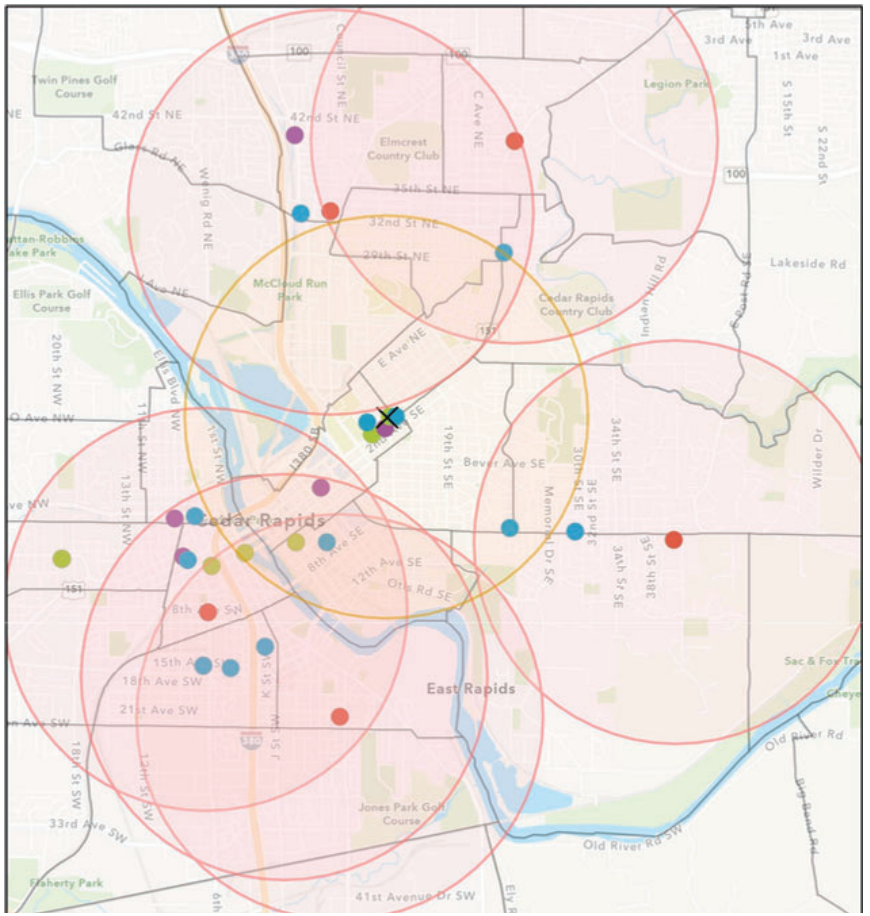
New locations opening to the north may have alleviated access barriers in Hiawatha. Store closures on First Avenue and in the Southwest have decreased access in those areas.



Downtown Cedar Rapids Food Desert

When Hy-nee announced the permanent closure of its First Avenue store in June of 2024 it resulted in the creation of a new food desert as there is now no full-service grocery store within 1.5 miles of the site.

The closure presents a challenge to residents in the Wellington Heights and Mound View neighborhoods who relied upon the store for both food and pharmacy access. The closure may also provide an opportunity for the community to replace lost access with an alternative market model to better suit the needs of the community.



*A potentially predatory business is one that takes advantage of individuals' immediate financial needs by offering services that, while providing quick access to cash come with excessively high fees, interest rates, or unfavorable terms. These businesses often target low-income or financially distressed individuals who may lack access to more conventional financial services. Examples include check cashing services, pawn shops, and payday loan companies.

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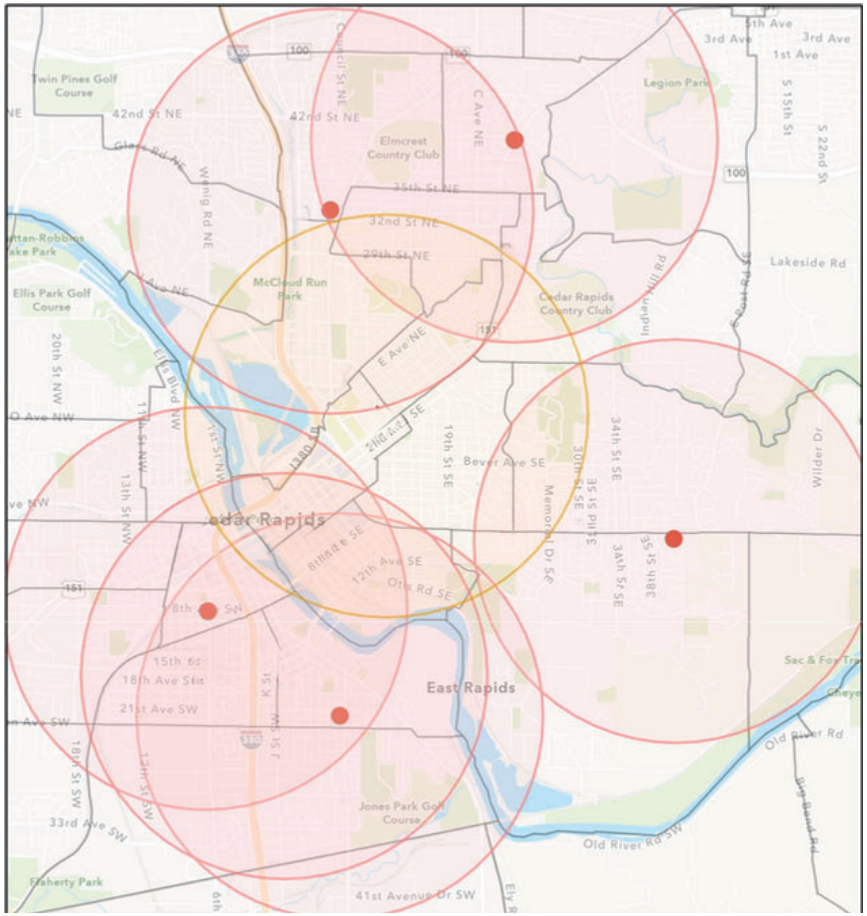
All Downtown Cedar Rapids Grocery Stores Excluding Convenience Stores

The Southwest Neighborhoods of Cedar Rapids were further impacted when Save-A-Lot closed in 2024.

The loss of the independently owned discount supermarket has had a noticeable impact on residents in the surrounding community.

Legend

- Grocery
- Store Service Area (1.5 Miles)



Linn County Food Access Outside of the Metro Area- All Accept SNAP



Communities With a Local Grocery Store:

Center Point
Central City
Mt Vernon
Lisbon
Palo

Communities With Only A Dollar Store or Convenience Store:

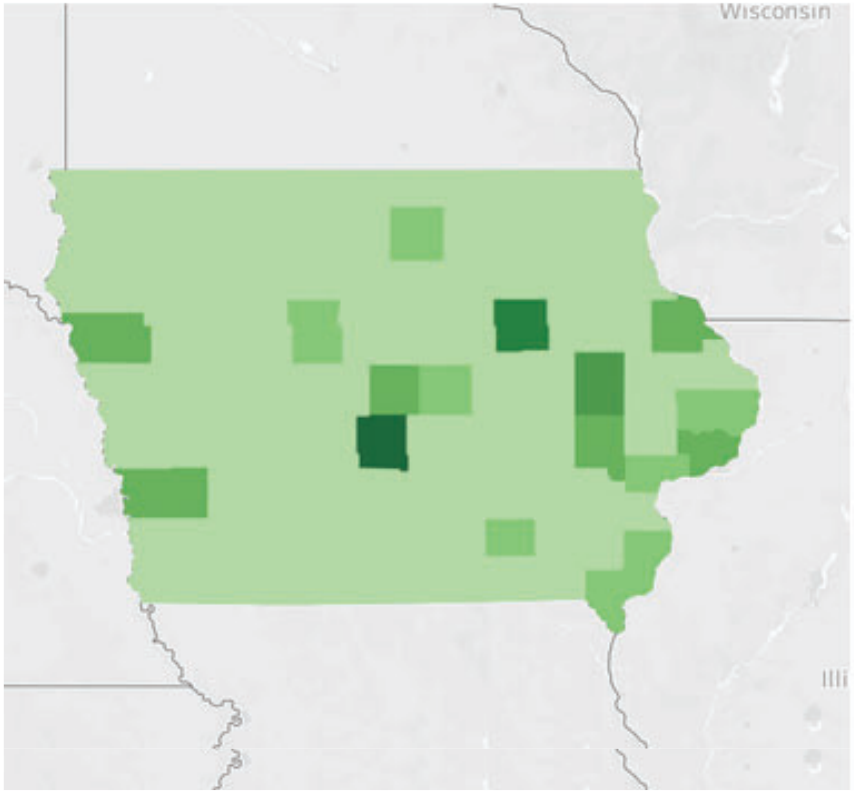
Alburnett
Central City
Ely
Fairfax
Springville

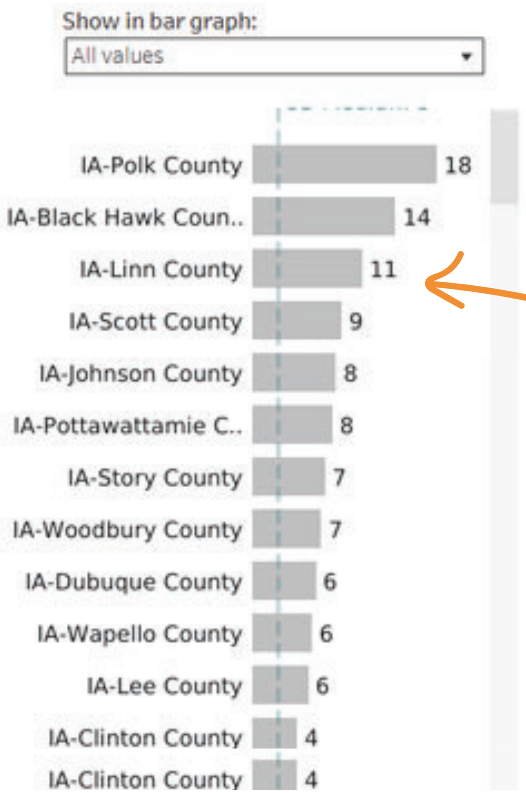
No Local Access:

Coggon
Prairieburg
Walker

Assistance-Based

Food Insecurity Index, 2020





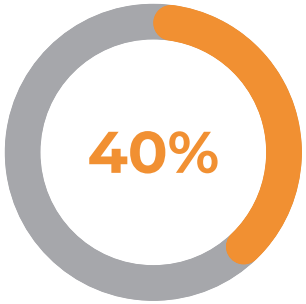
The Food Insecurity Index combines socioeconomic, health, and access indicators to measure food insecurity at the county level with 1 indicating very low level of insecurity.

https://help.healthycities.org/hc/en-us

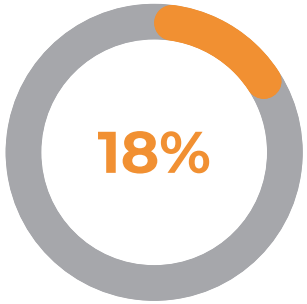
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Housing Cost Burden in Linn County

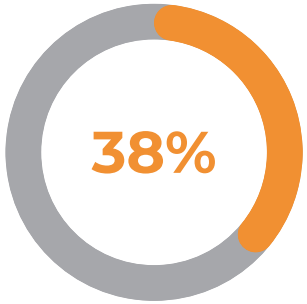
As defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), spending more than 30% of household income on housing costs.



Cost Burdened Renters 23,765 Households



Cost Burdened Homeowners 12,570 Households



Cost Burdened Households 36,335

Source: HUD CHAS 2017-2021

- **804 of these households have an income above $68,150**
- **938 have an income above $85,200**
- **Food is flexible, housing is not.**
- **Affordable housing is more likely to be located in a food desert.**

Based on housing cost burden 20% to 38% of Linn County households are likely to be food insecure.

Income Eligibility Standards for SNAP

The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal program that provides food assistance to low-income households. Benefits are provided monthly via an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card to help those eligible purchase food items at grocery stores.

- Gross income cannot exceed 130% of poverty guidelines.
- Net income cannot exceed 100% of poverty guidelines (does not apply to the elderly or disabled).

Household Size	130% (Gross)	100% (Net)
1	$19,584	$15,060
2	$26,580	$20,440
3	$33,576	$25,850
4	$40,560	$31,200

Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Snap Eligibility, Iowa Hunger Coalition

Average Benefit in In Linn County:
$169.63 per person
$349.90 per household
Equal to:
$1.88 per meal/person
$3.89 per meal/household

The USDA Thrifty Food Plan is a model for a low-cost, nutritious diet that is used to determine the maximum benefit amounts for SNAP. The plan's costs are updated monthly to reflect inflation.

USDA Thrifty Food Plan: August 2025
Sample Benefit Amounts

Child: Age 4-5: $42.40/week, $183.60/month
Female: Age 20-50: $57.30/week, $248.40/month
Male: Age: 14-19: $73.40/week, $317.90/month

Assistance-Based

Number of SNAP Households and Total Allocation, Linn County

	Average Number of Households Receiving Benefits	Average Number of Dollars Allocated (In Millions)
2024	10,571	$3.6
2023	10,444	$3.5
2022	10,678	$3.7
2021	10,861	$4.9
2020	12,131	$3.9
2019	12,182	$2.7
2018	12,947	$2.9

Current Number of Individuals Enrolled in Linn County: 22,309

Average household participation fell by 17% from 2018 to 2023 as earnings rose faster than eligibility limits and enhanced renewal documentation requirements resulted in fewer households qualifying, though need remained high.

Allotments spiked in 2020-2022, reflecting pandemic-era emergency SNAP boosts.

Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, SNAP Benefits

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Outdated Eligibility Criteria Measures

Measure Used for Statistical Purposes:

Official Poverty Measure (OPM)

- Developed by Social Security Administration in 1965 and utilized by U.S. Census Bureau
- Based upon the cost of food in a given year and and the share of a family's budget dedicated to food.
- Assumption that food accounts for 30% of a family's budget
- Reduced to 15% for farm families, assuming they spent less on retail food purchases
- Does not account for housing, transportation or healthcare costs

Mollie Orshansky

Developed the Poverty Threshold in 1963-1965 - still utilized today.



Supplemental Measure Used for Administrative Purposes: Determining eligibility for SNAP or other federal programs

Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) 2011

- Does not vary geographically except for Alaska and Hawaii
- Updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index not cost of living
- Based on income before taxes

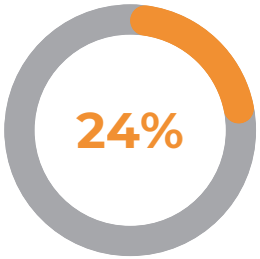
Poverty Guidelines

- Simplification of thresholds issued each year in the Federal Register by HHS.

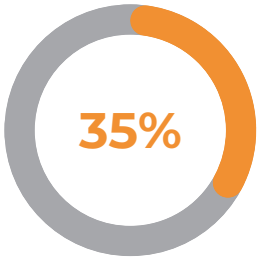
Underscores the Importance of Developing New Criteria for Determining Eligibility through Means Testing.

Assistance-Based

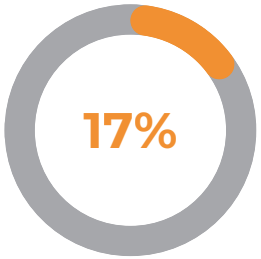
Characteristics of SNAP Households, Iowa 2024



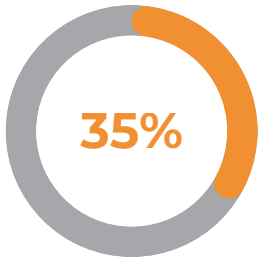
Over Age 60



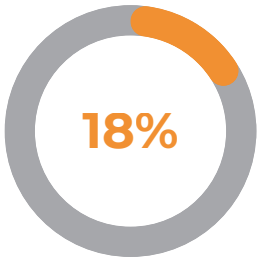
Under Age 18



Disabled



Employed



Zero Income

Average monthly gross income: $1,073
Average number in Household: 2

In Linn County, 17,610 individuals are eligible, but do not receive benefits.

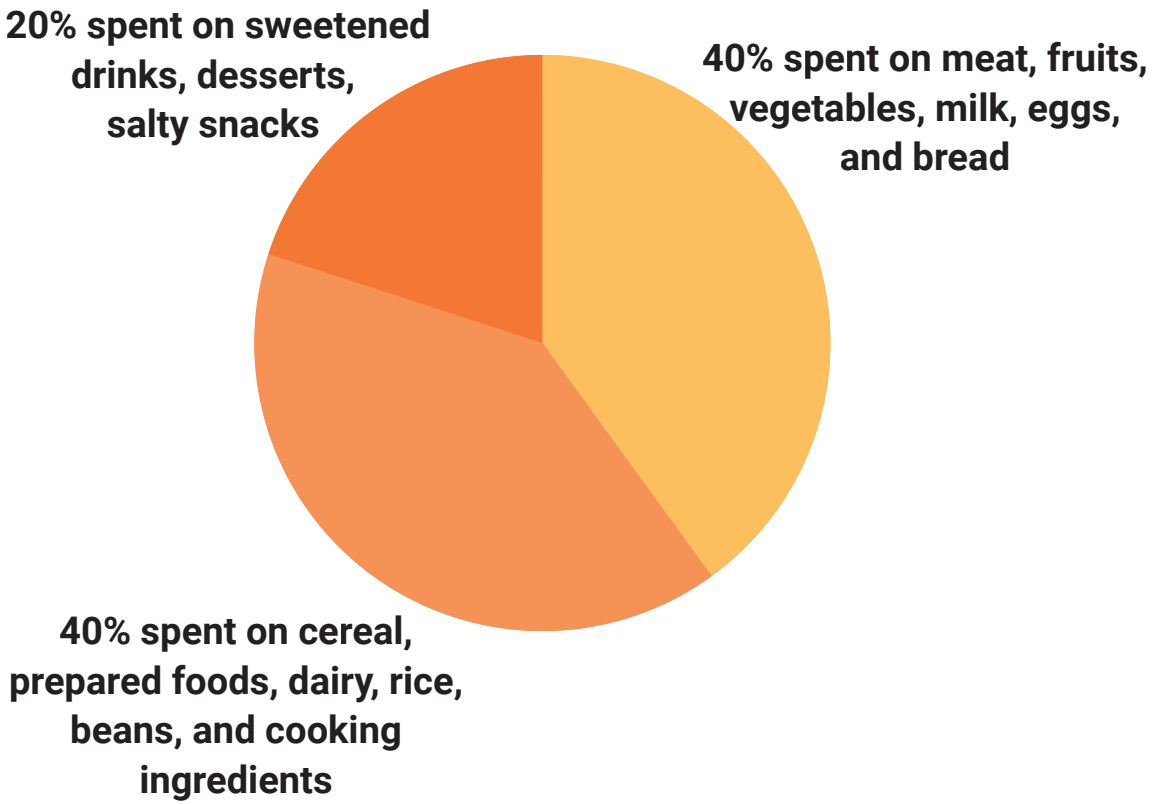


Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, SNAP Benefits and Iowa Hunger Coalition SNAP Map

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Assistance-Based

Characteristics of SNAP Redemption, Iowa 2022



Number of Retail Outlets Accepting SNAP in Linn County:
35 Grocery Stores
60 Convenience Stores
5 Farmers Markets

Average Transaction Amount: $39.00
Average Transactions per Household: 10.9

Households redeemed
57% of benefits in the first 7 days
80% of benefits in first 14 days

Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, SNAP Redemption and USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Foods Typically Purchased, 2016

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Foods Typically Purchased by SNAP and Non-SNAP Households

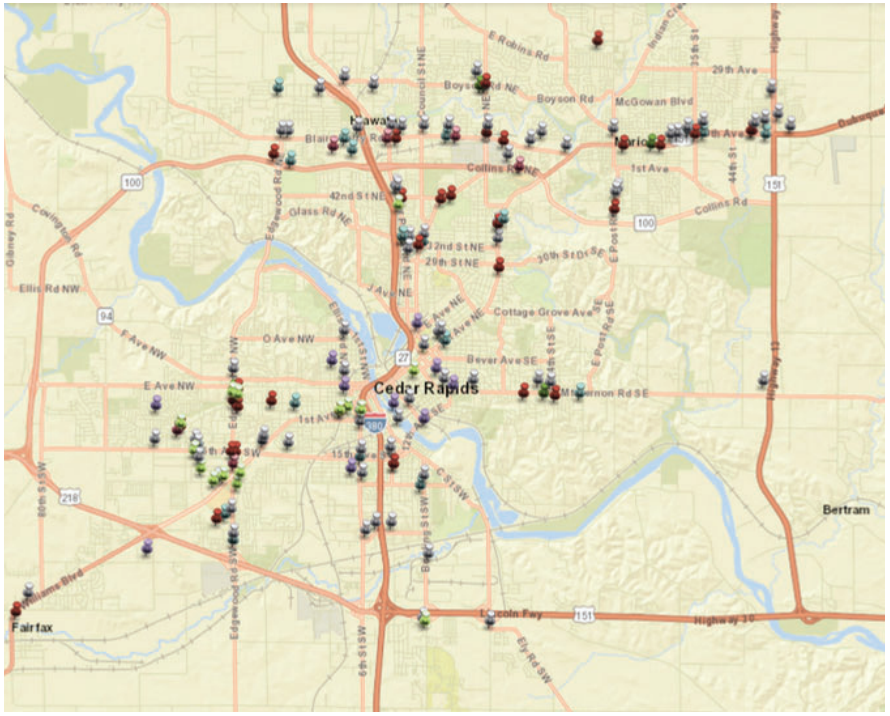
Data Limitations: USDA ERS National Survey, 2016, typically commissioned every 10 years. For food consumed at home only, does not include food purchased at restaurants.

Summary Category	SNAP Households	Non-SNAP Households
Meat, poultry & seafood	19.2%	15.9%
Sweetened Beverages	9.3%	7.1%
Vegetables	7.2%	9.1%
Frozen Prepared Foods	6.9%	5.1%
Prepared Desserts	6.9%	6.4%
High Fat Dairy/Cheese	6.5%	7.9%
Bread and Crackers	5.4%	6.3%
Fruits	4.7%	7.2%
Milk	3.5%	3.8%
Salty Snacks	3.4%	3.1%
Prepared Foods	3.1%	2.2%
Cereal	2.8%	3.0%
Condiments	2.7%	2.8%
Fats and Oils	2.4%	2.4%

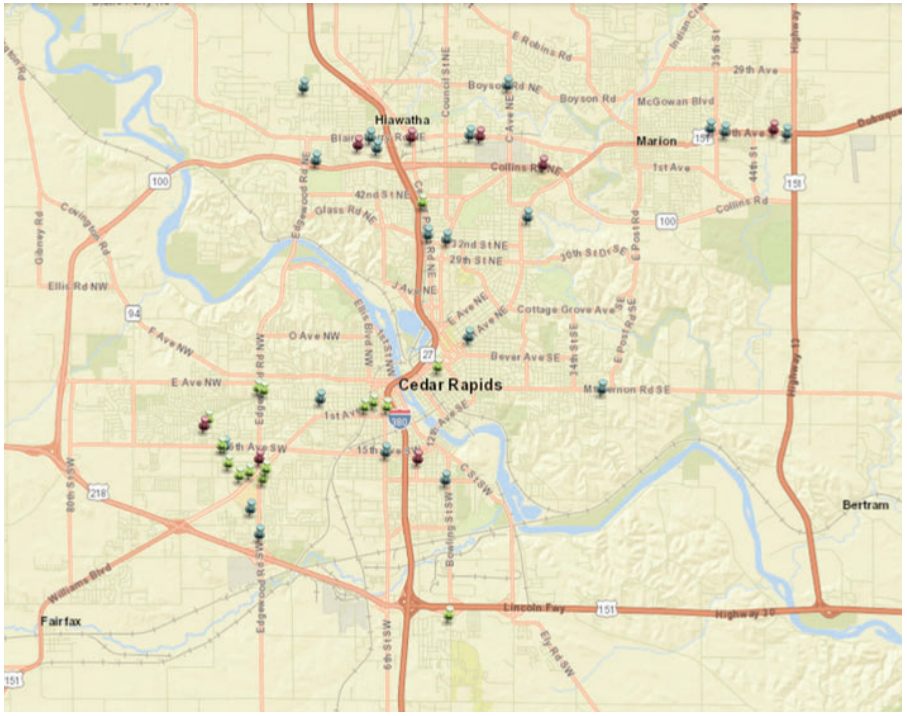
Summary Category	SNAP Households	Non-SNAP Households
Candy	2.1%	2.2%
Baby Food	1.9%	0.6%
Juices	1.7%	1.9%
Coffee and Tea	1.3%	1.8%
Bottled Water	1.2%	1.2%
Eggs	1.1%	1.2%
Other Dairy	1.1%	1.7%
Pasta, Cornmeal	1%	0.9%
Soups	1%	1.3%
Sugars	0.9%	0.8%
Nuts and Seeds	0.8%	1.4%
Beans	0.6%	0.7%
Rice	0.5%	0.4%
Flour	0.3%	0.3%

Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Economic Research Service: Foods Typically Purchased by SNAP Households

ECICNG



All Metro Area Retailers That Accept SNAP



All Metro Area Grocery Stores That Accept Snap Excluding Convenience Stores

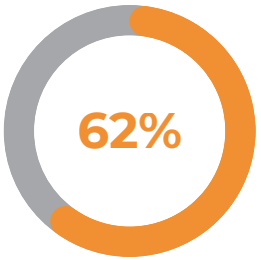
Source: USDA FNS SNAP Retailer Locator

Assistance-Based

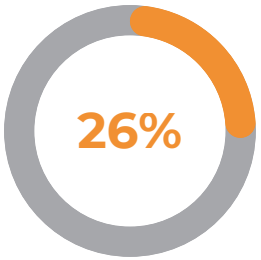
Together! Healthy Linn

The Linn County Public Health Food and Security Survey was conducted from June 2023 to July 2024 and received 432 responses.

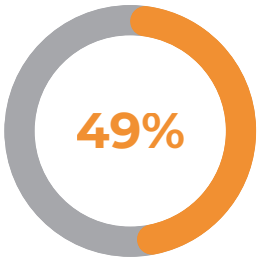
Pantry Client Characteristics



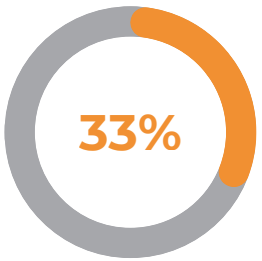
Do not qualify for SNAP



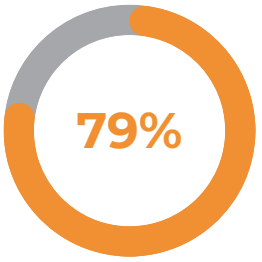
Were not sure if they qualified or had not applied



Did not meet income eligibility requirements



Own a home



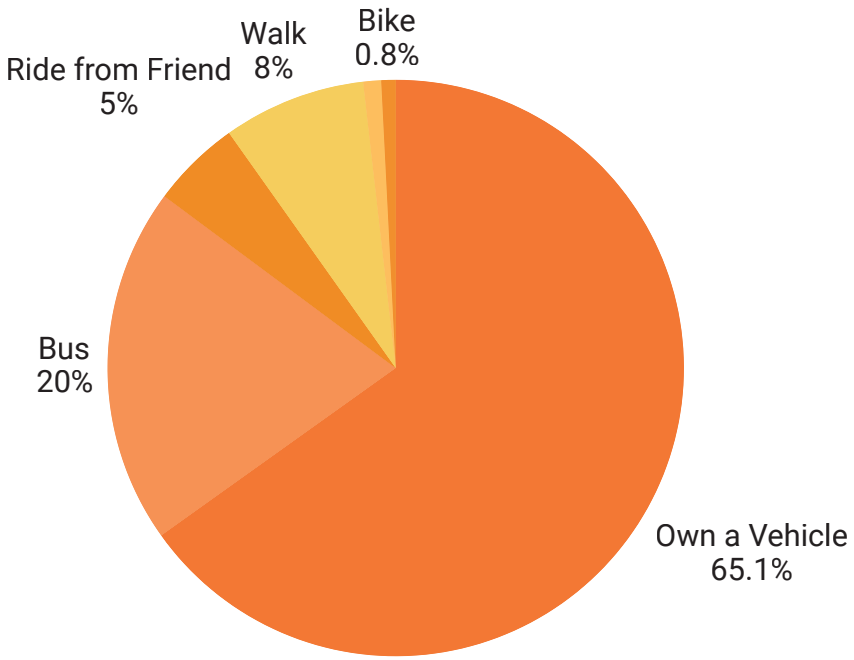
Have children

ECICOG

Assistance-Based

Together! Healthy Linn Survey

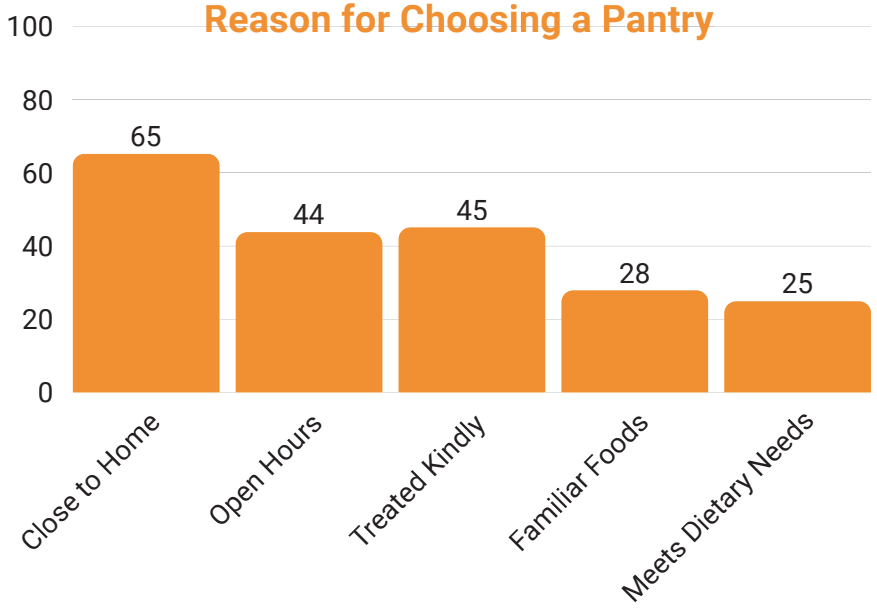
Pantry Client Transporttion



Pantries Visited Most Often

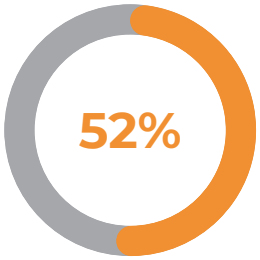
- Hoover Community School Pantry: 12.8%
- Linn Community Food Bank: 6.7%
- Olivet Neighborhood Mission: 6.7%
- Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry: 6.2%

Reason for Choosing a Pantry

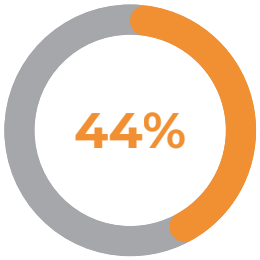


Assistance-Based

Together! Healthy Linn Survey



Said food received from a pantry lasts 2 or 3 days.



Need to go to more than one pantry in a typical week.

SNAP/Pantry Gap

If on average, 80% of SNAP benefits have been expended by mid-month, and a trip to the pantry lasts 2 to 3 days, a family may need to visit 5 to 7 pantries in the last 2 weeks of each month to meet their needs.



Assistance-Based

Meal Gap

The number of meals missed by low-income families modeled after The Sonoma County Hunger Index.

1. Calculate the total number of meals needed by low-income households.
2. Subtract the meals provided by food assistance programs, and subtract out meals that households are able to purchase themselves.
3. The balance is the Meal Gap.

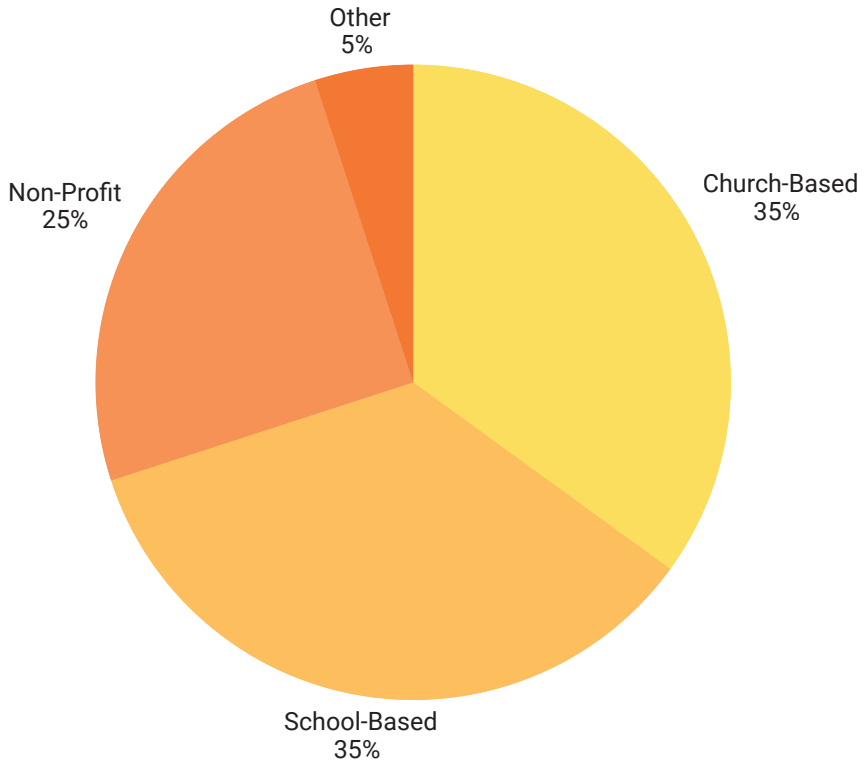
Meals missing per food insecure household in Linn County = 436 meals.

$17,846,000
Additional funds required to meet food needs in Linn County.



FEEDING AMERICA

Pantry Models In Linn County



Source: USDA , ERS, Food Access, Linn County Food Assistance Resources, HACAP

Pounds of Food Distributed in Linn County by HACAP

2024
5,531,194
Average 445,932/month
or 15.7 pounds of food per food-insecure person/month

2025
January - September
3,588,554
Average 398,728/month
or 14.1 pounds of food per food-insecure person/month

- **Average estimated consumption is 167 pounds of food per month/person**

Assistance-Based

Pantry Hours - Weeknights

Pre-selected Box of food
Enough for 3 days
Twice a month

Monday

Cedar Hills Community Church
5 PM - 6 PM

Oakland Church of the Nazarene
First and Last Monday
6 PM - 8 PM

Tuesday

Together We Achieve
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Wednesday

Oakland Church of the Nazarene
First and Last Wednesday
6 PM - 8 PM

Together We Achieve
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Thursday

Prairie Cares Market
College Community School District
4:15 PM - 6:15 PM
Box Pickup for boxes ordered by Wednesday

Friday

Oakland Church of the Nazarene
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Together We Achieve
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Source: Linn County Food Assistance Resources

ECICOG

Assistance-Based

Saturday

Allen Lincoln Douglas Project
First & Second Saturday 11 AM - 2 PM
First Church of the Open Bible
Fourth Saturday 10 AM - 12 PM
HACAP Northwest
9 AM - 11:30 AM
Hiawatha Public Library
10 AM - 5 PM
Kings Kitchen
First and Last Saturday 12 PM - 3 PM
Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church
1 PM - 3 PM
Together We Achieve
12 PM - 2 PM

Sunday

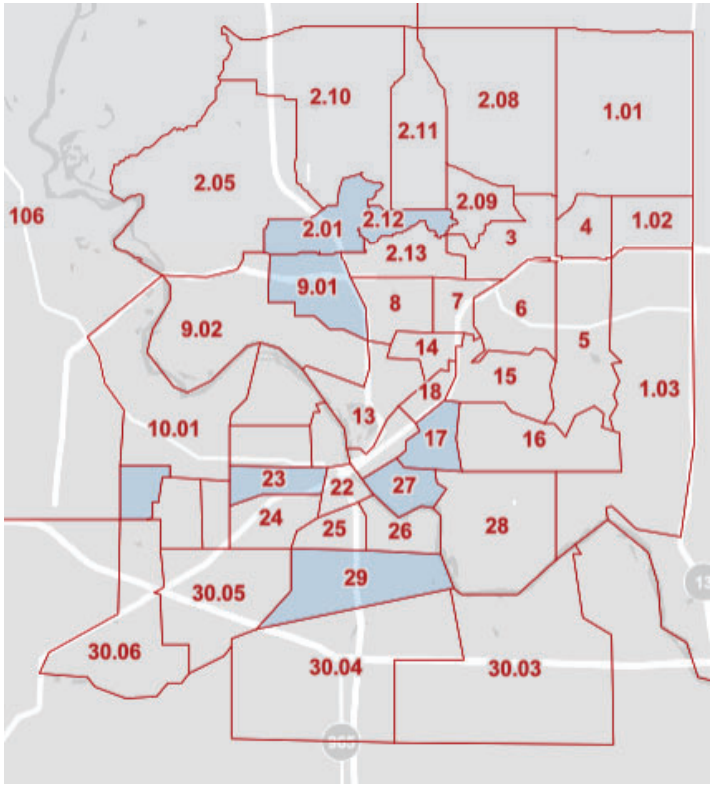
Wellington Heights Pantry at FCC
Second and Fourth Sunday
1:30 PM- 3:20 PM



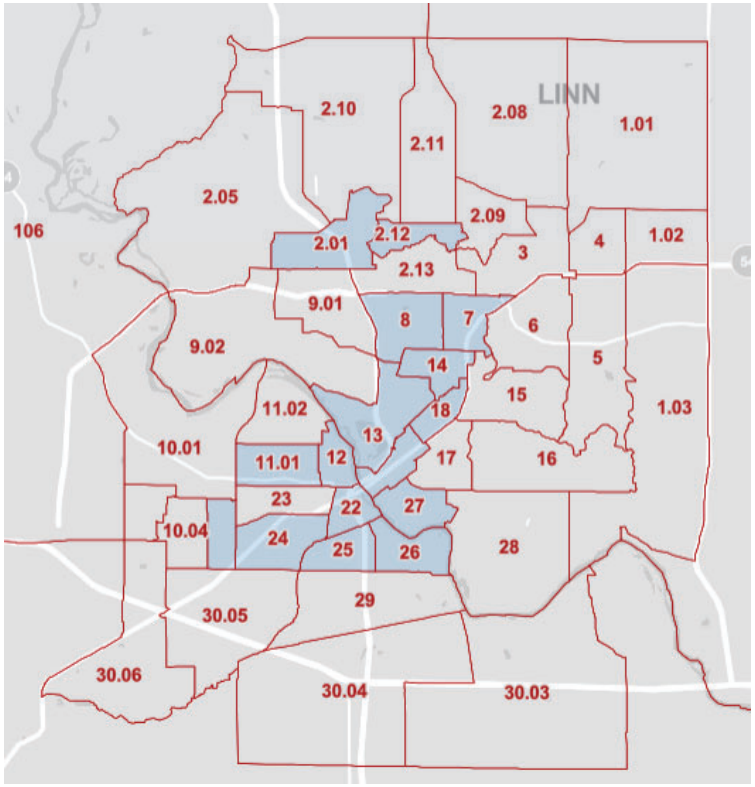
Photo Credit: Hiawatha Public Library

Source: Linn County Food Assistance Resources

Assistance-Based



Location of pantries with weekend or evening hours, by census tract.

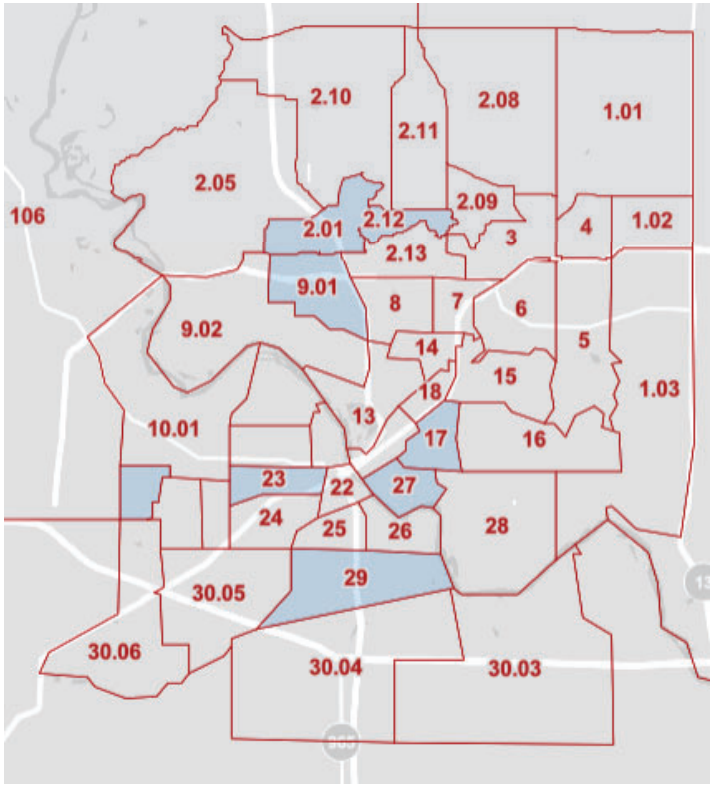


All low-to-moderate income tracts
Median Family Income $38,879 to $57,434
Underserved Population Without Access Local Access to Pantry = 36,008

Source: FFIEC Census Report - Population and Income

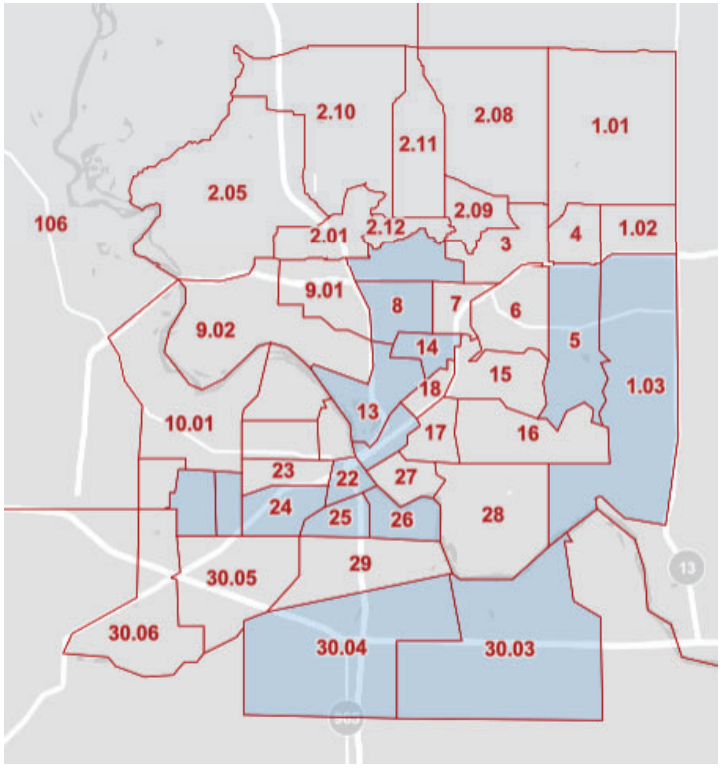
ECICOG

Assistance-Based



Location of pantries with weekend or evening hours, by census tract.

10,980 Food Insecure Individuals live in a neighborhood with no access to a food pantry on weekends or evenings.



All income tracts with poverty rates above the median rate of 9.9% for Linn County. Underserved Population Without Access Local Access to Pantry = 54,171

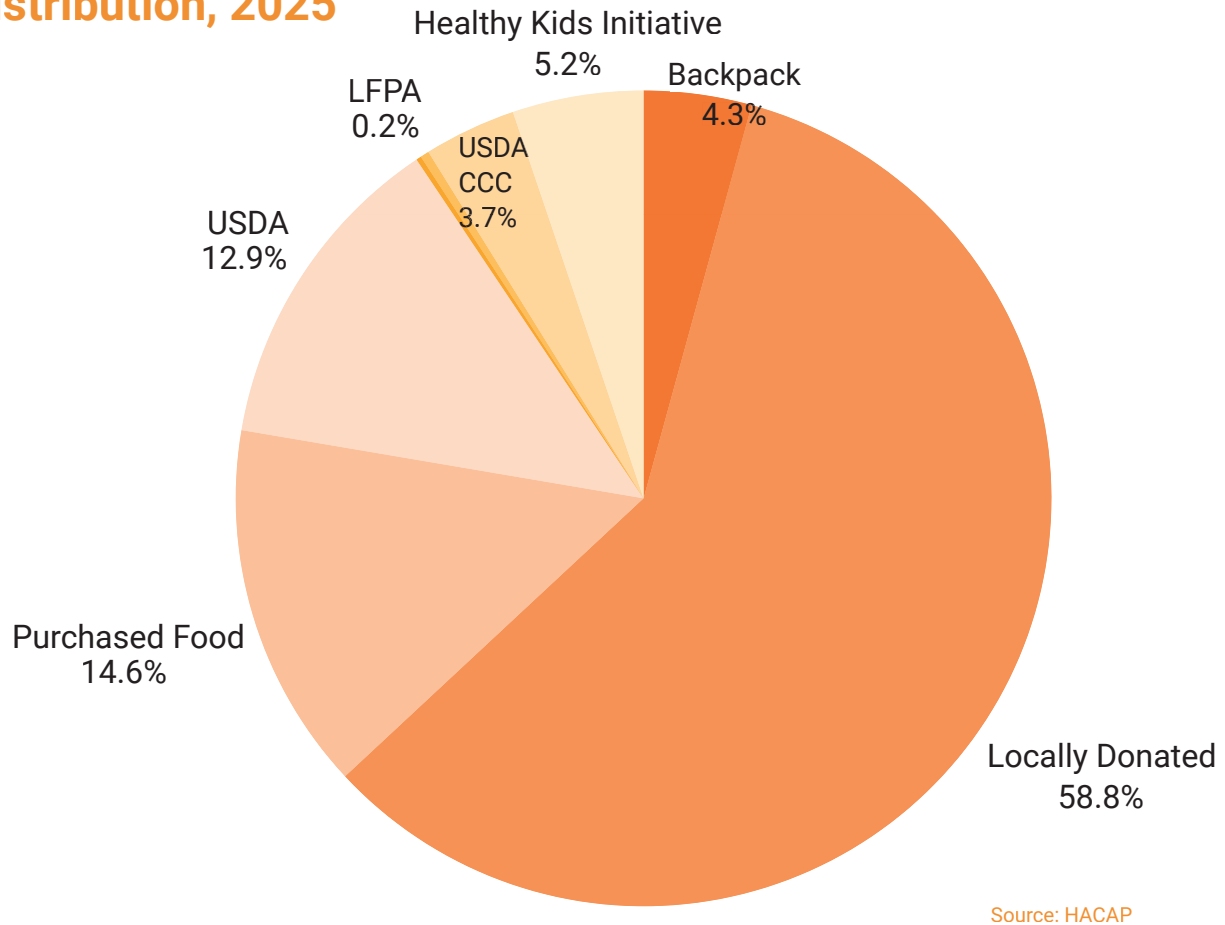
Source: FFIEC Census Report - Population and Income , HACAP

ECICOG

Assistance-Based

HACAP Source of Foods For Distribution, 2025

The Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) Food Reservoir serves as a hub, distributing food through the network of pantries in Linn County, as well as nonprofit agencies and schools.



Source: HACAP

Food Is Medicine

Food Is Medicine is a HACAP-led pilot project involving 22 healthcare providers across Linn County.

As part of routine screening, patients are asked two questions to assess food insecurity. Those identified as food insecure are offered a box of shelf-stable food during their visit.

More than half of the patients who screened positive ultimately declined the food box.

	2024	2025
Number Screened	21,923	25,327
Number Identified as Food Insecure	2,134	2,276
Number of Boxes Distributed	963	1,065
Number of Boxes Declined	1,101	1,270

Source: HACAP

Hunger Vital Sign™ Survey
I/We worried whether my/our food would run out before I/we got money to buy more.

[ ] Often true
[ ] Sometimes true
[ ] Never true
[ ] Don't know

The food that I/we bought just didn't last, and I/we didn't have money to get more.

[ ] Often true
[ ] Sometimes true
[ ] Never true
[ ] Don't know

Institutional-Based

USDA FARM to SCHOOL 2023 CENSUS

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the Farm to School Census which is conducted periodically to assess the state of farm to school activities. The Census surveys all school food authorities (SFAs) that participate in the National School Lunch Program. In Linn County, each public school district operates as its own SFA. The most recent Census was conducted in the fall of 2023 for the 2022-2023 school year. Invitations to participate were sent to 18,833 SFAs and 12,559 SFAs (67%) responded. SFAs that began farm to school activities in 2023-2024 received a limited set of questions about outcomes.

Results for all Linn County SFAs follows below. Note: No results were available for Central City Community School District, College Community School District, or Mount Vernon Community School District.

ECICOG

State Profile for Iowa

Total School Food Authorities (SFAs) in Iowa:
442

Farm to School Participation:
75.1%

Participating Less Than 3 years:
61%

Provide Food, Nutrition, or Agricultural Education:
48.6%

Have An Edible Garden:
15.8%

2023 USDA Farm to School Census

	Alburnett CSD	Cedar Rapids CSD	Center Point-Urbana CSD	Linn-Mar CSD
Number of Schools	1	32	4	12
Number of Participating Schools	1	6	4	12
Free Lunch or Reduced-Price Meals Eligibility	Fewer than 35%	35% to 80%	Fewer than 35%	Fewer than 35%
Length of Participation	6 to 10 years	3 to 5 years	Less than 3 years	More than 10 years
Edible School Garden	Yes	Yes	At 1 School	No
How District Defines "Local"	Within the Region	Within 50 miles	Within 100 miles	Within the State
Sources for Procurement	Direct, Food Hub, USDA DoD Fresh Program	USDA DoD Fresh Program	Food Hub, USDA DoD Fresh Program	USDA DoD Fresh Program
Top Local Foods Purchased	Milk, Apples, Yogurt	Apples, Carrots, Poultry, Milk, Pasta	Apples, Lettuce, Cucumber, Corn, Peas	Poultry, Lettuce, Apples, Baked Goods, Milk
Dollars Spent on Local Food	$58,447 (26% of budget)	No response	21,500 5% of budget	$35,000 7% of Budget

ECICOG

2023 USDA Farm to School Census

	Lisbon CSD	Marion Independent SD	North Linn CSD	Springville CSD
Number of Schools	1	5	3	1
Number of Participating Schools	1	5	3	1
Free Lunch or Reduced Price Meals Eligibility	Fewer than 35%	Fewer than 35%	Fewer than 35%	Fewer than 35%
Length of Participation	**First Year 2023-2024**	Less than 3 years	**First Year 2023-2024**	**First Year 2023-2024**
Edible School Garden	No	No	No (plans for future)	No (plans for future)
How District Defines "Local"	Not yet determined	Within State	Within 100 miles	Within 50 miles
Sources for Procurement	N/A	Food Hub, USDA DoD Fresh Program	N/A	N/A
Top Local Foods Purchased	N/A	Milk, Melons, Grapes, Salad Mix, Corn	N/A	N/A
Dollars Spent on Local Food	N/A	$113,500 (23% of budget)	N/A	N/A

Note: N/A (First year of participation, did not receive full survey)

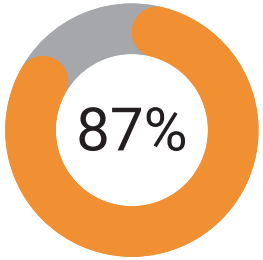
2023 USDA Farm to School Census - Challenges

Which challenges has your SFA experienced when trying to procure local foods?	Alburnett	Cedar Rapids	Center Point	Linn Mar	Lisbon	Marion	North Linn	Springville
Limited availability of local foods	x					x		
Limited availability of precut/processed local foods	x	x						
Local foods not available from primary vendors	x	x						
Local food vendors don't offer broad range of products	x	x	x					
Difficult to find local producers, suppliers, and distributors	x							
Local foods are not identified or marked as local						x		
Delivery challenges	x	x	x			x		
Difficult to coordinate procurement of local foods with non local	x	x				x	x	
Local producers aren't bidding	x							
Don't always receive ordered items	x		x					
Unclear how to write specifications targeting local foods	x						x	x
Local foods are more expensive than conventional products	x	x	x	x				
Unstable product prices	x							
Lack of kitchen equipment to process/prepare local foods	x							
Lack of staff time to process/prepare local foods	x		x					

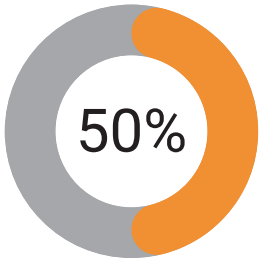
ECICOG

Institutional-Based

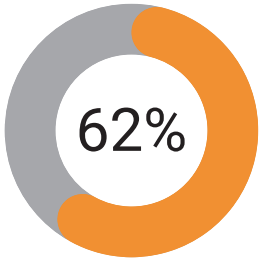
2023 USDA Farm to School Census - Outcomes



Indicated participation in Farm-to-School increased consumption of fruits and vegetables and increased a positive perception of the school food program among students.



Indicated participation in Farm-to-School increased participation in school meals and increased positive perception of school food program among teachers, administrators, and parents.



Indicated participation in Farm-to-School increased access to better quality foods and lowered school meal program costs.

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Note: Three schools indicated participation lowered costs AND felt that local foods were more expensive.





25% of local food programs were funded by the USDA Farm to School Grant and 50% of local food programs in Linn County were funded by the Local Foods for Schools (LFS) grant which was cancelled in March 2025.

Institutional-Based

Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA)

CANCELLED

Funded through the American Rescue Plan (ARPA). Awards were made through non-competitive cooperative agreements with state and tribal governments.

- Eligible expenses: 2022 -2024/2025
- Iowa received $5.6 million to purchase food for pantries, nonprofit organizations, early childhood centers, and senior centers.
- 15 producers awarded $360,000

Iowa Legislature allocated $200,000 in grants STATEWIDE through Choose Iowa to provide funding with a 1:1 match.

Local Food for Schools (LFS)

CANCELLED

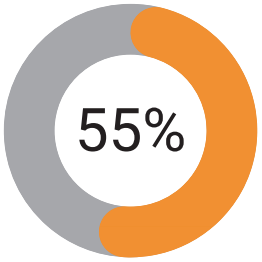
Funded through the American Rescue Plan (ARPA). One award per state government. Iowa received $2.1 million.

- Eligible expenses: October 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.
- Farmers completed a Producer Registration Form
- Schools applied for grants in the amount of $4,000 for produce and $4,000 for protein/dairy
- Schools were assigned a hub to coordinate the purchases
- 13 producers participated
- 9 schools awarded $79,000

Iowa Legislature allocated $70,000 through Choose Iowa to provide $1,000 with a 1:1 match for foods purchased from participating suppliers (2 awarded in Linn County, Feed Iowa First and Evans Family Farm) .

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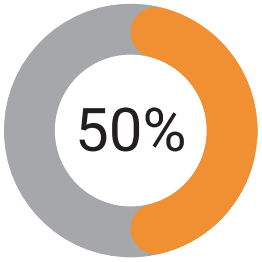
Institutional-Based



Producers who participated with LFPA/LFS who set their own prices for products.



Every dollar spent through the LFPA and LFS program generated $1.84 to $2.00 in economic activity. LFS kept property tax dollars funding schools in the community.



The USDA estimated that more than 50% of grant recipients were new or beginning farmers, women, or people of color.

LFPA funds could not be used for infrastructure investments (trucks, cold storage, warehousing space or processing).

The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) grant was created in 2023 to address infrastructure development. Funds are distributed to states allowing them to make noncompetitive sub-awards. ***There is a current proposal in Congress to rescind funding.***

This underscores both the demand for local food and the opportunity to continue investing in infrastructure, technical assistance, and market development to strengthen Linn County's food system.

Source: Iowa Food Systems Coalition, ISU Extension, Wallace Center at Winrock International: USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Program: Initial Impacts, Opportunities, and Recommendations

ECICOG

Section 2: Mechanisms of Influence and Barriers



Mechanisms of Influence -
How the system constrains food access and contributes to food insecurity



Economic Drivers

- Food inflation outpaces wage growth.
- Rising housing, transportation, and healthcare costs leave little discretionary income for low-to-moderate income households.



Eligibility Structures and Assistance Gaps

- SNAP income thresholds do not reflect real cost of living, childcare, or healthcare.
- 30% of food-insecure households do not quality for SNAP.
- Documentation and recertification requirements suppress enrollment.
- Benefits are inadequate, forcing mid-month shortages.



Pantry System Capacity and Model Constraints

- Reliance on donated food leads to inconsistent quantity, limited culturally relevant foods, and limited dietary-appropriate foods.
- The federal government incentivizes food donations by offering businesses generous tax breaks and liability protection which allows overproduction, increased waste, and harmful environmental impacts.
- Charity-based responses obscure systemic causes and prevent policy reform, while food banks expand without reducing food insecurity rates.



Inconsistent Federal Funding Mechanisms

- Cancellation of federal local food programs (LFS) removed a major support mechanism.

Barriers -
What makes equitable food access difficult in Linn County



Geographic and Access Barriers

- Lack of grocery stores in rural towns.
- Pantry client data shows reliance on buses, walking and obtaining rides from friends demonstrating transportation barriers to accessing food.
- Food deserts identified in multiple census tracts, including newly formed areas after the First Avenue Hy-Vee closure, reducing full-service access for an entire neighborhood.
- Grocery stores are geographically clustered, leaving large areas, especially low-income tracts without proximate retail options.



Pantry System Limitations

- 52% of pantry users say food lasts only 2 to 3 days requiring multiple visits to multiple pantries per week.
- Food pantry distribution provides 14-15 pounds/month per food-insecure person, compared with average consumption of 167 pounds per month.
- 10,980 food-insecure individuals live in neighborhoods without weekend or evening pantry access.
- Decentralized pantry system with greater than 50 pantries operating in Linn County.
- Stigma and mismatched need, evidenced by high rates of declined Food-Is-Medicine boxes.



Institutional Procurement Barriers

- Schools and institutions face challenges sourcing local foods due to cost, delivery, specifications, and staff capacity.



Section 3: Strategic Entry-Points for Change

Entry Points for Change -

Transition from Charity-Based Model to Food Sovereignty Model

The charity-based model has evolved over the past 100 years and like any system it will resist change. The food sovereignty model is a framework that asserts people and communities, not corporations or charity systems, have the power to determine the kind of food system they want and focuses on who controls the means of producing, distributing, and accessing food.

- Revise communication strategy to reinforce new root cause-oriented programing. Change the common narrative that hunger is an individual behavior problem due to the lack of budgeting skills or personal choices. Meaningful change requires structural intervention, policy advocacy, and addressing the social determinants of health, not just more pantries or donations.
  Debunk the bootstrap myth.
- Increase board diversity (food banks): by occupation, ethnicity, gender, and people with lived experience by 50%. Social change has never been successful when implemented by one group of people on the behalf of another. Attempts at changing hunger or poverty in Linn County cannot succeed without the involvement and leadership of low-income residents who are compensated for their participation.

Infrastructure and Access Investments

- Reduce census tracts with low food access by expanding mobile markets and greater evening/weekend pantry coverage.
- Pilot community refrigerators programs and neighborhood-based retail models.

Expand and Strengthen Institutional Food System Procurement

- Expand farm-to-school procurement through provision of technical assistance and model policy development with target percentages.
- Support local producers through micro-grants.
- Pilot a “season extension” program with micro-grants for hoop houses and irrigation assistance.
- Support small food businesses in obtaining county and institutional procurement contracts.

Entry Points for Change

Foodlink, a food bank in Rochester, NY, did a great job of not expanding, but instead using its space strategically to support community-based food businesses and distributing through a mobile market.

Curbside Market

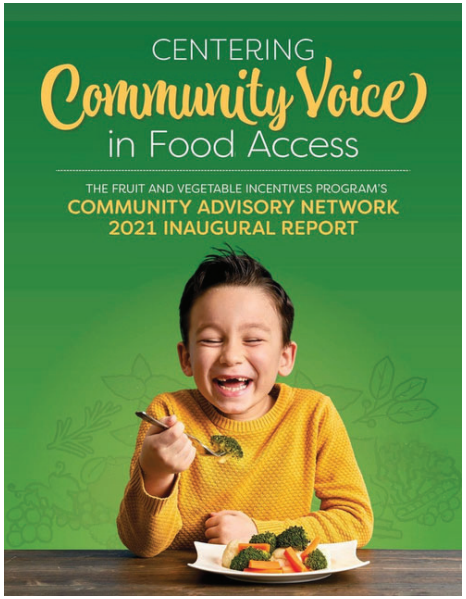
The stops include affordable housing sites, senior centers, health clinics and community centers. The truck makes 6-12 stops daily and operates 6 days a week. Curbside Market trucks are stocked with locally sourced fresh fruits, vegetables, and select grocery items. Items may be purchased with cash, debit cards, Apple Pay, Google Pay, SNAP/EBT and WIC vouchers.

See Appendix A for full list of items offered, prices, and schedule.



Community Advisory Network (CAN)

The purpose of CAN is to gather and document input from individuals who use the Fruit and Vegetable Incentive Program (FVIP) —to improve access and contribute to planning for future development of the program.
This year, CAN membership is comprised of eight individuals across Washington state.



Key Metrics for Change:

Reduce by half the number of census tracts that have low or very low healthy food access by 2035 from a 2024 baseline of 12.

Triple the number of Cedar Rapids Community School District schools that are sourcing local food by 2035 from a baseline of 6 schools to 18.

Part IV: Food Waste Management

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) describes Food Waste as food that was not used for its intended purpose and is managed in a variety of ways, such as a donation to feed people, creation of animal feed, composting, anaerobic digestion, or disposal in landfills or combustion facilities.

Section 1: Key Data
Section 2: Mechanisms of Influence and Barriers
Section 3: Strategic Entry-Points for Change

ECI CMG



Section 1: Data

Food Waste



Nearly 40% of food in the U.S. is never eaten.

Each person spends $3,000 per year on uneaten food.



Iowans dispose of 200 pounds of food per year at home.

25% is thrown away in its original packaging.

Food waste is the #1 material disposed of in Iowa's landfills.

Source: Iowa DNR Food Waste Prevention and Management Study, 2025

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The Linn County landfill is on pace to be at maximum capacity in 2037.

There will not be another landfill in Linn County. When the current landfill is full, it will transition to a transfer station. Garbage will then be transported to another site at considerable expense.

Food waste diversion is one of the strategies the county hopes to utilize to extend the current landfill life.



Composting

2,925 Tons

The amount of food waste composted in Iowa in 2024

300,000 Tons

The compost capacity of Iowa waste facilities per year

Most facilities are operating well below permitted levels.

Increasing compost capacity is limited by:

- **Contamination due to the inclusion of non-compostable items**
- **Permitting**
- **Associated financial costs for businesses**

Source: Iowa DNR Food Waste Prevention and Management Study, 2025



Composting is not just a waste-reduction strategy, it is a critical mechanism that support soil health, food security, and the circular functioning of the local food system.



Section 2: Mechanisms of Influence and Barriers

Mechanisms of Influence -
How the system contributes to food waste



Structural Incentives to Overproduce

- Businesses receive tax incentives and liability protections for donating excess food. This creates a system were overproduction is economically rewarded.



Charity-Model System Contributes to Waste

- Donated surplus does not always translate into usable food, leading to waste at the household or organizational level.
- Food charity is framed as a solution to both hunger and excess production, masking the systemic drivers of both.



Market and Retail Consolidation

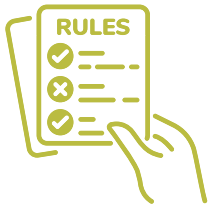
- Large retailers control purchasing standards and volume expectations.
- Centralized distribution increases spoilage before products reach smaller markets.



Infrastructure Gaps

- Food waste prevention depends on the ability to store, transform, aggregate, and preserve food. Without these capacities, perishable foods spoil before they can be used locally.

Barriers -
What makes reducing food waste difficult in Linn County



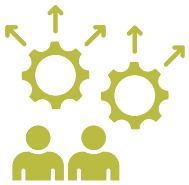
Policy Barriers

- Procurement and food safety rules limit repurposing or redistribution.
- Lack of standardized data on local food waste volumes.



Economic Barriers

- Compost drop-off fees ($32/ton, $15 minimum) deter small businesses and nonprofits.
- Businesses save money by donating - not by reducing waste at the source.



Operational Capacity Barriers

- Prepared food recovery requires containers, handling guidance, and coordination.
- Rescuing or gleaning food requires staff or volunteers able to mobilize quickly.

Section 3: Strategic Entry-Points for Change



Entry Points for Change -

Expand Food Waste Diversion Infrastructure

- Pilot curbside organics collection.
- Develop community compost hubs at schools.
- Fund the purchase of depackaging equipment.
- Fund adoption of food waste apps such as Food Rescue Hero or Waste No Food.
- Explore partnership with Eat Greater Des Moines Food Rescue app

Public Awareness Campaign

- Promote household food waste reduction.
- Provide compost education and starter resources.
- Provide technical assistance to restaurants and institutions to audit their waste streams and make adjustments to reduce food waste.

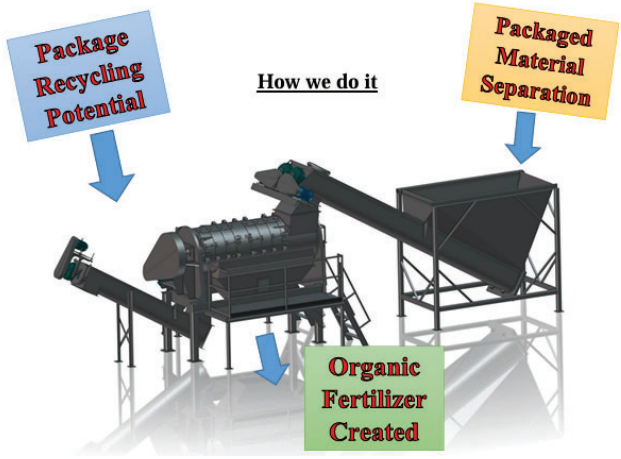
Resource:

IDALS
Food Waste Prevention &
Management Program Study 2025

https://www.iowadnr.gov/media/8921/download?inline



Food packaging is not compostable or biodegradable. It is necessary to separate food waste from packaging so the food can be broken down in a composting operation or digestor. Depackaging equipment removes food from the package utilizing mechanical force.



Source: Muscatine Area Resource Recovery for Vehicles and Energy, Food Recovery Efforts

Part V: Food Systems Coordinator Role

A dedicated **Food Systems Coordinator** would address the current governance and coordination gaps identified in this assessment and community conversations conducted as part of the Linn County Food Systems Council strategic planning process.

The Food Systems Coordinator would serve as a central point of alignment for county-led food security activities, policies, and communications. At present, food system efforts are dispersed across several county departments and countless nonprofits, resulting in fragmented food access work, limited strategic alignment across procurement, transportation, land use, and health outcomes. This fragmentation is compounded by the absence of mechanisms to structurally incorporate the voices of food-insecure residents into decision-making and by ongoing confusion among stakeholders regarding the origin of rules, standards, and compliance expectation.

The Coordinator would direct county resources and leverage private-sector capacity for greater impact, enhance and connect work already underway, broaden communication across sectors, and support the Food Systems Council in tracking progress on actions and indicators and strengthen the link between community efforts and government systems to ensure aligned, measurable improvements in food security across Linn County.

ECICOG

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ECICOG

LINN COUNTY

Appendix A: Curbside Market Schedule and Price List

***WIC accepted at all sites!†** / WIC ya esta disponible en todo los sitios †*

Foodlink's Curbside Market makes it easy to purchase healthy, affordable food for you and your family. / El Curbside Market facilita la compra de alimentos saludables y asequibles para usted y su familia.

We accept | Aceptamos:



Benefits of shopping at the Curbside Market / Beneficios de comprar en el Curbside Market:

- **Shop for fresh produce and grocery items at convenient locations** / Compra productos frescos y comestibles en lugares convenientes
- **Shop local — we partner with local farmers** / Compre localmente — Nos asociamos con agricultores locales
- **SNAP users can earn credit** toward their next purchase any time they buy fruits and vegetables at the Curbside Market! / ¡Los usuarios de SNAP pueden ganar crédito para su próxima compra cada vez que compren frutas y verduras en el Curbside Market!
- **Our friendly team makes shopping easy!** / ¡Nuestro amable equipo facilita las compras!

† Not everything sold on Curbside Market is WIC eligible (e.g. honey, cider) / No todo lo que se vende en el Curbside Market es WIC elegible (Miel, sidra de manzana etc.)



Subscribe to Curbside Market's text messaging and stay up to date on the latest news and events. Text FOODLINK to 855-979-8060 / Suscríbase a los mensajes de texto del Curbside Market manténgase actualizado sobre las últimas noticias y eventos. Mandanos un mensaje con FOODLINK a 855-979-8060



The Curbside Market will be closed December 22,2025 - January 3, 2026/ El Curbside Market va estar cerrado el 22 de Diciembre al 3 de enero

Foodlink Curbside Market

2011 Mt. Read Blvd. | Rochester, NY, 14615 | 585.328.3380 | 855.979.8060 (text)

Visit FoodlinkNY.org/CurbsideMarket or call 211 for more information | Visite FoodlinkNY.org/CurbsideMarket o llame al 211 para más información

Find fresh, affordable food at a stop near you!

¡Encontra alimentos frescos y asequibles en una parada cerca de ti!

JULY 7 - DECEMBER 20, 2025 SCHEDULE / JULIO 7 - DICIEMBRE 20, 2025

MONDAY / LUNES

Closed 9/1, 10/13

Lifespan - Wolk Café
12:30 - 1:30 PM
25 Franklin St, 14604
Near Liberty Pole Way

Long Pond Senior Housing
12:30 - 1:00 PM
1 GBC Parkway, 14626

Cornerstone Pointe Apts
1:15 - 2:00 PM
3 GBC Parkway, 14626

Hall of Justice
2:00 - 3:15 PM
99 Exchange St, 14608

Dunn Towers
2:30 - 3:30 PM
100 Dunn Tower Dr, 14606

Kennedy Tower
3:30 - 4:30 PM
666 S. Plymouth Ave, 14608
Parking lot on Edith St

Gateway Apartments
3:45 - 4:15 PM
345 Spencerport Rd, 14606

TUESDAY / MARTES

Closed 11/11

Lake Tower
10:30 - 11:30 AM
321 Lake Ave, 14608

The Gardens at Town Ctr
10:30 - 11:00 AM
100 Greece Center Dr, 14612
Park in back by gazebo

St. Ann's Adult Day Ctr
10:30 - 11:30 AM
1500 Portland Ave, 14612
Back north end of building

Abraham Lincoln Apts
11:45 AM - 12:15 PM
355 N Park Dr, 14609

Seneca Towers
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM
200 Seth Green Dr, 14621

ESLC East Ave
12:00 - 12:45 PM
270 East Ave, 14604

Carriage Factory Apts
2:00 - 3:00 PM
33 Litchfield St, 14608

Winton Garden Towers
2:30 - 3:30 PM
2052 E. Main St, 14609
Parking lot off Cedarwood Terrace

Irondequoit Meadow Reserve
2:30 - 3:15 PM
100 Hulda Park, 14609

Danforth Towers
3:30 - 4:15 PM
140 West Ave, 14611

Skyview Park Apts
3:30 - 4:30 PM
200 Skyview Park Ctr, 14622
Next to leasing office

Tailor Square Apartments
3:45 - 4:30 PM
1155 North Clinton Ave. 14621
Parking lot on Avenue D

WED/ MIERCOLES

Closed 7/23, 11/26

Pinnacle Place Apts
10:30 - 11:45 AM
919 S. Clinton Ave, 14620

Thurston Road YMCA Neighborhood Center
10:30 - 11:15 AM
597 Thurston Rd, 14619

Arnett Library
11:30 AM - 12:15 PM
310 Arnett Blvd, 14619
Parking on the corner of Arnett and Wellington Ave

Maplewood YMCA
12:15 - 1:15 PM
25 Driving Park Ave, 14613

Andrews Terrace
2:00 - 3:00 PM
125 St. Paul St, 14604

Keeler Park Apts*
2:30 - 4:00 PM
501 Seneca Manor Dr, 14621

Refugees Helping Refugees
2:45 - 3:30 PM
228 S Plymouth Ave, 14608

Rochester View Apts
3:30 - 4:00 PM
4365 W. Henrietta Rd, 14467
Parking on south side of bldg

Eastman Reserve Apts
3:45 - 4:30 PM
303 Eastman Ave, 14615

DePaul Ridgeview
4:00 - 4:30 PM
109 Marburger St, 14621

THURSDAY / JUEVES

Closed 7/24, 10/30, 11/27

Dept of Human Services
10:30 - 11:15 AM
111 Westfall Rd, 14620

Fairport Apts
10:30 - 11:15 AM
1030 Whitney Rd E, Fairport 14450
Next to leasing office

Midvale Commons
11:30 AM - 12:15 PM
2770 Baird Rd, 14450

The Hub at Elite
11:45 AM - 12:30 PM
919 Culver Road, 14609

Manhattan Square Family Medicine
2:00 - 3:00 PM
454 E. Broad St, 14607

VOC Liberty Landing Apts
2:30 - 3:00 PM
185 Scio St, 14605

YWCA Apartments
3:15 - 4:15 PM
175 N. Clinton Ave, 14604
Parking lot on Bittner St

University Tower
3:30 - 4:15 PM
625 University Ave, 14607

FRIDAY / VIERNES

Closed 7/4, 9/19, 11/28

Durand Senior Apts
10:15- 11:15 AM
4250 Culver Rd, 14622

ESLC - Rockwood Center
10:30 - 11:15 AM
3833 E. Henrietta Rd, 14467

Rochester Psychiatric Ctr
10:30 - 11:15 AM
1111 Elmwood Ave, 14620

Plymouth Gardens
11:30 AM - 12:45 PM
1400 S. Plymouth Ave, 14611

Venture PROS
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
975 Elmwood Ave, 14620

Beechwood Neighborhood
11:45 AM - 12:30 PM
441 Parsells Ave, 14609

Charlotte Harbortown (Lake Ave)
2:15 - 3:15 PM
4575 Lake Ave, 14612

Marketplace Senior Apts
2:15 - 3:00 PM
1100 Miracle Mile Dr, 14623

OACES
2:30 - 3:15pm
30 Hart St, 14605

Charlotte Harbortown (River St)
3:30 - 4:30 PM
60 River St, 14612

Rochester Highlands
3:30 - 4:30 PM
47 Green Knolls Dr, 14620
Across from dog park

St. Bernard Park Apts
3:45 - 4:30 PM
2260 Lake Ave, 14612
North end of the building

SATURDAY / SÁBADO

Closed 7/5, 8/30, 11/29

The Hamilton Apts
10:30 - 11:45 AM
185 Mt. Hope Ave, 14620

James Dobson Apts
12:00 - 1:00 PM
150 Van Auker St, 14608
In front of main building

Phillips Village
2:30 - 3:30 PM
100 Krieger Rd, Webster 14580

* Indoor market

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Revised 9/5/25

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Foodlink Curbside Market

NOVEMBER 2025
NOVIEMBRE 2025

FRUIT *Fruta*

Apples	Apples	Bananas	Pears	Kiwi
each, *Manzanas singular*	3lb bag, *Manzanas en Bolsas*	each, *Gineas singular*	each, *Peras, singular*	each, *singular*
$.50	$3.25	$.25	$.50	$1.00
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

Pineapple	Tomatoes	Grape Tomatoes	Lemons	Limes	Grapefruit
each, *Piña, singular*	each, *Tomates, singular*	pint, *Tomates, Uva*	each, *Limónes, singular*	each, *Limas, singular*	each, *Pomelo, singular*
$4.50	$.50	$2.00	$.50	$.50	$1.00
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

Grapes, Red/Green	Cantaloupe	Navel Oranges
bags, *Uvas rojas/Verdes en bolsas*	each, *Cantalupo, singular*	*Naranja singular*
$4.00	$3.00	$0.75
QTY	QTY	QTY

NEW Check out the Recipe of the Month on Page 4!

Seasonal Items

Winter Squash	Brussels Sprouts	Pie Pumpkins	Cranberries
each, *calabaza de invierno*	1 quart, *coles de Bruselas*	*Calabazas para pastel*	bag, *Arándanos rojos*
$1.00	$3.00	$2.00	$2.25
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

Visit Foodlinkny.org/CurbsideMarket for locations near you!

Ask about our seasonal specials!

Prices change monthly

Foodlink Curbside Market

NOVEMBER 2025
NOVIEMBRE 2025

VEGGIES *Verduras*

Avocados	Beets	Broccoli	Seeded Cucumbers	Carrots
each, *Aguacate, singular*	each, *Remolachas, singular*	each, *Brócoli, singular*	each, *Pepino con Semillas, singular*	1lb. bag, *Zanahorias*
$1.00	$1.00	$1.00	$.50	$1.00
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

Baby Carrots	Celery	Green Cabbage	Garlic	Ginger	Spinach
1 lb. bag *Zanahorias Bebe*	each, *Apio, singular*	each *Repollo Verde, singular*	each, *Ajo, singular*	each, *Jengibre, singular*	10 oz bag *Espinaca*
$1.50	$1.50	$2.00	$.50	$1.00	$2.50
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

Red Onion	Yellow Onions	White Potatoes	Russet Potato	Sweet Potato	Collards
each *Cebollas Rojas, singular*	2 lb bag *Cebollas Amarillas*	5 lb bag *Papas Blancas en Bolsas*	each *Papas Russet, singular*	each *Batatas, singular*	each, *Berzas*
$.75	$1.25	$3.00	$.50	$.75	$2.50
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

Mushrooms	Jalapeños	Green Bell Peppers	Rainbow Peppers	Lettuce	Kale
6 oz & 8 oz pkg *Hongos*	each, *singular*	each, *Pimientas Verdes, singular*	each, *Pimientas Varias*	*Lechuga*	each, *Col rizada*
$1.75/$2.50	$.25	$1.00	$3.00	$3.50	$2.50
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

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Ask about our seasonal specials!

Prices change monthly

Foodlink Curbside Market

NOVEMBER 2025
NOVIEMBRE 2025

GROCERY *Tienda de comestibles*

Whole Wheat Pasta	Brown Rice	Beans	Black Beans	Beans (Dried)
1 lb pkg Pasta de Trigo Integral	*1 lb bag Arroz Integral Bolsa*	*15 oz Frijoles Enlatados*	*15 oz Frijoles Negros Enlatados*	*1 lb bag Frijoles (secos)*
$1.00	$1.00	$1.00	$1.00	$1.50
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

GROCERY *Tienda de comestibles*

Lentils (Dried)	Tuna	Peanut Butter	Whole Wheat Bread	Eggs
1 lb bag Lentejas (secas)	*5 oz, Pescado Enlatado, Atún*	*16 oz Mantequilla de Maní*	*16 oz, Pan de Trigo*	*1 dozen Huevos*
$1.50	$1.00	$2.25	$3.00	$2.00
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

INFANT *Niña*

Gerber Baby Foods	Enfamil Powdered Formula	Gerber Cereal
Assorted 4oz Alimentos Para Bebés Clasificado	*12.5 oz Fórmula en Polvo*	*8 oz, Rice or Oatmeal Arroz o Avena*
$1.25	$20.00	$3.00
QTY	QTY	QTY

JUICES *Jugos*

Orange Juice
64oz., De Jugo de Naranja en Botella
$5.00
QTY

DAIRY *Lácteos*

Apple Juice	Apple Cider	Whole Milk	1% Milk	Cheddar Cheese	Mozzarella Cheese
64 oz De Jugo de Manzana	*64 oz Sidra de Manzana*	*1/2 gal, Leche Entera*	*1/2 gal Leche 1%*	*8 oz Queso*	*8 oz Queso*
$3.50	$4.00	$2.50	$2.50	$3.25	$3.25
QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY	QTY

Visit Foodlinkny.org/CurbsideMarket for locations near you!

Ask about our seasonal specials!

Prices change monthly

Foodlink Curbside Market

NOVEMBER 2025
NOVIEMBRE 2025

CEREAL *CEREALES*

Corn Flakes	Cheerios	Rice Krispies
18 oz box, Caja de 18 oz	*18 oz box, Avena Tostada*	*12 oz box Arroz Crujiente*
$3.00	$3.00	$3.00
QTY	QTY	QTY

NEW

Recipe of the Month

Butternut Squash and Apple Soup
Serves 8 • Serving: 2/3 cup

Just Say Yes To Fruits & Vegetables

Silky smooth, slightly sweet, and super-easy to make, this soup is a fall favorite.



Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, peeled and chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 large butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cubed, or 1 (20-ounce) package pre-cut squash
- 1 tart apple, cored and cubed
- 8 cups chicken or vegetable broth, low-sodium

Utensils Needed

- Cutting board
- Sharp knife
- Large heavy-bottomed pot
- Measuring cup
- Measuring spoons
- Heatproof spatula
- Slotted spoon
- Blender or food processor
- Pot holder

Directions

1. Put the pot on the stove and turn the heat to medium. When it is hot, carefully add the oil.
2. Add the onion, garlic, celery, curry powder, and basil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, 10-12 minutes.
3. Add the butternut squash, apple, and broth and raise the heat to high; bring to a boil.
4. Turn the heat down to low and cook until the squash is very tender, 45 minutes. Set aside to cool down a bit, at least 15 minutes, at room temperature. Stir occasionally to help the mixture cool.
5. Using the slotted spoon, very carefully remove the soup solids and put them in the blender or food processor. Do not fill more than halfway.
6. If you are using a blender, put the top on but remove the little cap in the center. If using a food processor, leave the plunger out (both will allow the steam to escape). Cover the hole loosely with a clean dish towel. Turn the blender to the lowest speed and increase the speed as the soup purees. Gradually add the cooking liquid. Blend or process until completely smooth.
7. Serve right away, or cover and refrigerate up to 3 days.

Sign Up For Fresh Rewards Today!

FRESH REWARDS

A new way to save on groceries is here! Join **Fresh Rewards**, a loyalty program for all of our amazing customers. Just for signing up today, you'll get a $5 credit towards your purchase. Earn additional credits by winning shopper challenges, offered every other month. *Limited credits are available for each challenge.*

For more information, visit our website.

Visit Foodlinkny.org/CurbsideMarket for locations near you!

Ask about our seasonal specials!

Prices change monthly