



Existing and Emerging Food Hubs in Maryland

Background

Across the country, consumers are looking for local food. In Maryland, agriculture direct sales are on the upswing and demand is on the rise for local farm fresh food in retail and institutions. Food Hubs are also on the rise, filling a gap in food aggregation and distribution. The definition of a regional food hub is defined by a USDA report ([The Role of Food Hubs in Local Food Marketing](#), January 2014) as:

“...a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution and marketing of source-identified food products, primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail and institutional demand.”

This report uses the USDA working definition of food hubs, and information gathered by the National Food Network. The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) compiled information on the current and emerging food hubs in Maryland as of September 2014, based on internet research and staff outreach. The list represents the food hubs that SMADC knows of to date. For the purposes of this report, aggregation and distribution were used as key defining criteria.

There are five existing and four emerging Food Hubs in Maryland as of July 2014, and three wholesale distribution/auction sites. A convening of the emerging Maryland Food Hubs was held in the summer of 2014, where each of the attending food hubs expressed willing to meet periodically and work together as a Food Hub Coalition.

Key

NA: Not Available

Food Hubs Operating in Maryland

The following five active food hubs are recognized by both the [National Good Food Network](#) and [USDA](#) and are currently listed as active in Maryland.

1. [Friends and Farms, LLC](#), Columbia, Maryland
 - a. Hub Model: Privately Held Business
 - b. Years in Operation: 2012

- c. Supply/Scale: Customized regional food basket offered to direct customers and retail on a weekly basis with drop off and pick up locations around the Baltimore Metro area. Suppliers are located in MD, VA, WV, and PA. The business aggregates food from the Loveville Produce Auction, Maryland Food Center Authority, and many independent growers and processors.
- d. Serving approximately how many: 650 families
- e. Status:
 - ✓ USDA recognized
 - ✓ National Good Food Network recognized
- f. Future plans: NA
- g. Additional Information: NA

**Source of information: generated from the website (www.friendsandfarms.com) and directly from Philip Gottwals, Friends and Farms, LLC.*

- 2. **Garrett Growers Cooperative, Inc.**, Oakland, Maryland
 - a. Hub Model: Farm Cooperative
 - b. Years in Operation: 3
 - c. Supply/Scale: Garrett Grower’s supplies produce to direct customers, 14 restaurants in the Deep Creek lake area, a CSA, grocery stores, convenience stores, and catering companies. Suppliers are a cooperative of 10 farms in the Oakland area.
 - d. Serving approximately how many: NA
 - e. Status:
 - ✓ USDA recognized
 - ✓ National Good Food Network recognized
 - f. Additional Information: NA
Future plans: NA

**Source of information: generated from the website (www.garrettgrowers.com) and directly from Cheryl DeBerry, Garrett Growers Cooperative, Inc.*

- 3. **Hometown Harvest**, Frederick, Maryland
 - a. Hub Model: Privately Held Business
 - b. Years in Operation: 5
 - c. Supply/Scale: Suppliers are located in MD, VA, and PA. Customers are located in MD, DC, and VA, home delivery service of local, organic food and non-Certified Organic food
 - d. Serving approximately how many: 2,000
 - e. Status:
 - ✓ USDA recognized
 - ✓ National Good Food Network recognized
 - f. Future plans: “We are working to move the business on to our farm. Once completed, Hometown Harvest will have an on-site market and commercial

kitchen at the farm. The kitchen will give us the ability to add additional value added items to our menu. “– Tony Brusco, Owner of Hometown Harvest

- g. Additional Information: Farmer Owned and Operated

**Source of information: generated from the website (www.hometownharvest.com) and directly from Tony Brusco, Hometown Harvest.*

- 4. **Maryland Farm to Table Produce**, Baltimore, Maryland
 - a. Hub Model: Privately Held Business
 - b. Years in Operation: 2
 - c. Supply/Scale: Connects the farmer to the chef through an online portal and delivery system. Farmers post their produce to the website and chef’s view and order from the farmers on the website. There is one central location where farmers deliver to. Chefs can buy produce from multiple farmers in one transaction. The order is delivered to the restaurant from the central location. Recipients are restaurants. Suppliers are located in MD and PA.
 - d. Serving approximately how many: NA
 - e. Status:
 - ✓ USDA recognized
 - ✓ National Good Food Network recognized
 - f. Future plans: NA
 - g. Additional Information: NA

**Source of information: generated from the website (www.mdfarmtotable.com).*

- 5. **Washington's Green Grocer**, Capital Heights, Maryland
 - a. Hub Model: Privately Held Business
 - b. Years in Operation: 20
 - c. Supply/Scale: Coordinates the sale and marketing of farm sourced food, aggregates food from farmers along the mid-Atlantic. Recipients are direct consumers in the Washington D.C. area, supply is also donated within the D.C. area, distributes directly to consumers in the Washington D.C. area. Suppliers are located in Washington D.C., MD, VA, PA, NY.
 - d. Serving approximately how many: NA
 - e. Status:
 - ✓ USDA recognized
 - ✓ National Good Food Network recognized
 - f. Future plans: NA
 - g. Additional Information: NA

**Source of information: generated from the website (www.washingtonsgreengrocer.com).*

Emerging Food Hubs in Maryland

1. Baltimore Food Hub

- a. Hub Model: TBD
- b. Years in Operation: 0
- c. Supply/Scale: NA
- d. Serving approximately how many: Baltimore metro area.
- e. Status:
 - ✓ Emerging
- f. Future plans? The Baltimore food hub is in the process of hiring a full-time Baltimore Food Hub Program Manager as of September 2014. Prior to having any facilities come online, it is the goal for the Food Hub to deliver a set of programs and services focused on investing in and empowering the local food economy through small business development for culinary entrepreneurs. This work will include small business technical assistance and building relationships between major food buyers, suppliers, value-added producers and others within the sector. A primary focus of the Baltimore Food Hub's work will be wealth building for low-income, immigrant, and minority entrepreneurs and workforce candidates, and local job creation.
- g. Additional Information: The Baltimore Food Hub is a physical development project East Baltimore that will transform a 3.5 acre site into a campus of facilities and programs focused on building the Baltimore food economy, workforce, and food access opportunities. The Hub will include a kitchen incubator, workforce facilities, shared office space, urban agriculture, and community gardens. First phase construction begins in the fall of 2014 with development concluding at the end of 2015. The Hub is managed by an advisory board of project stakeholders with a development team including American Communities Trust, Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition, and others. Commercial kitchen space for rent by the hour to culinary entrepreneurs and food truck operators, the incubator will also provide business technical assistance programming, access to affordable start-up capital, and contract opportunities to help community-based food entrepreneurs legitimize and grow their businesses. Other programs offered: Office space for food businesses and nonprofits. As entrepreneurs create new small businesses, job training, urban farming, teaching garden, farm stand/garden center (open to the public).

**Source of information: generated from the website (<http://www.baltimorefoodhub.com>) and directly from Greg Heller, American Communities Trust.*

2. Eastern Shore Food Hub

- a. Hub Model: The Food Hub facility is being built by Eastern Shore Food Hub Corp., a Maryland corporation which has applied for tax exempt status with the IRS. It

will enter into an operating and lease agreement with Real Food Productions, L3C (a Vermont low profit limited liability corporation).

- b. Years in Operation: 0
- c. Supply/Scale: Existing small and intermediate farmers and emerging farmers; consumers within a 200-mile foodshed; institutions such as public schools, hospitals and prisons which can be models of good food behavior; schools and universities taking the real food challenge; landowners seeking an alternative or complementary agricultural practice on their lands; and communities and families that have limited access to healthy foods.
- d. Serving approximately how many: The Hub is not yet in operation, but hopes to commence Easton high tunnel production in the fall of 2014, commence Kent County field production in early spring 2015, and build the Easton aggregation facility in the spring of 2015.
- e. Status:
 - ✓ Emerging
- f. Future plans: Real Foods will lease Easton and Kent County premises and conduct the aggregation and distribution functions of the Hub, and, in a later phase, provide commercial kitchen and value added processing to producers and the public. The non-profit will carry out the programmatic side, with food access, emerging farmer training and apprenticeships, farmer-landowner linking, environmental best management practice support, healthy eating and cooking classes, and other public education programs. Real Foods will provide fair rental value to the non-profit through in-kind contribution of food for its programs. Real Foods will produce foods at the Easton and Kent County locations.
- g. Additional Information: Working with the Maryland Food Hub Coalition.

**Source of information: generated from the website*

(<http://dbm.maryland.gov/agencies/capbudget/FY%202015%20Testimony/Eastern%20Shore%20Food%20Hub.pdf>) and directly from Cleo Braver.

3. Howard County

- a. Hub Model: TBD
- b. Years in operation: 0
- c. Supply/Scale: Consumers will be restaurants, nursing homes, hospitals, senior centers, recreation and parks programs, and others in the Howard County area, suppliers: NA
- d. Serving approximately how many: NA
- e. Status:
 - ✓ Emerging
- f. Future plans: NA
- g. Additional Information: The food hub will have commercial kitchen space for new food businesses, and a mobile system with a Mobile Market which brings locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables to the people who need them (see Roving Radish).

- Howard County Food Policy Task Force was created in December 2013, The Task Force, consisting of 24 members, will meet once a month from January 2014 to January 2015. The purpose is to bring people together to make recommendations that will impact the local food and agricultural system, providing a neutral place where people from all areas of the food system and government can meet, learn about what each does, and consider how their actions impact other parts of the system. Partner: Horizon Foundation
- Food Policy Council Case Study for Montgomery County, Maryland: <http://www.americancommunitiestrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Food-Policy-Councils.pdf>
- [Roving Radish](https://rovingradish.com): Howard County's new initiative to bring fresh, affordable and healthy meals to more people: The Roving Radish mobile market. For 20 weeks beginning July 2014, ready-to-prepare meals are dropped off to five sites throughout the county. The meal kits come with pre-cut food and enclosed recipes – enough to make two meals for a family of four for \$24. Price assistance is provided to families in need at \$10 per kit. Individuals and families can sign up for one week at a time, or for a four-week package. Other support for the program comes from Wegman's, and Apple Ford, which is providing a refrigerated vehicle for initial use.

**Source of information: generated from the websites*

(www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/columbia/ph-ho-cf-food-policy-complete-1212-20131209,0,7001425.story) and (<https://rovingradish.com>).

4. [Southern Maryland Food Hub](#)

- a. Hub Model: TBD
- b. Years in Operation: 1
- c. Supply/Scale: Currently Farming 4 Hunger, in partnership with SMADC and the Maryland Food Bank, coordinates distribution, aggregation, and marketing of fresh, local food from Southern Maryland farms directly to those in need. Serving fresh, local produce within the five Southern Maryland counties from July through October. Suppliers are currently 12 farms in Southern Maryland.
- d. Serving approximately how many: Approximately 25,000 families in 2014 from July through October.
- e. Status:
 - ✓ Emerging
- f. Future Plans: Formalize Food Hub model. Expand sales to schools, hospitals, stores, restaurants, etc., increase number of farm suppliers and participating organizations, implement the Maryland farm tax credit bill (once passed), continue to build partnerships with food retailers and institutions, and provide value-added processing capability and new farmer training/incubation.
- g. Additional Information:

- [Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission \(SMADC\)](#): SMADC strategically invests in programs and initiatives to support economic growth and jobs, grow new farmers and related industries, and expand access and availability to healthy fresh food in an environmentally sound manner. SMADC's programs benefit farmers and consumers throughout Maryland, with a special emphasis on the five counties of Southern Maryland. In FY'14, SMADC placed a special emphasis on improving access to fresh farm foods for the hunger community and working poor, farmers' markets, building the local meats and dairy industry, "growing new farmers", and enhancing public awareness.
- [Hub and Spoke Program](#): A Maryland Task Force was convened 2013 to study the needs, challenges and opportunities of creating a Hub and Spoke model in this area. The program is part of a three-year pilot program in which fresh, locally grown produce donations from farmers/gardeners are distributed to needy families in the five counties of Southern Maryland. Edible produce may be brought to a central site (Hub) which then distributes the food to the hunger community through a mobile pantry program at targeted sites (Spokes) in the community such as churches, schools or pantries. Alternatively, farms can directly donate to Certified Spokes. Report: "[The Task Force Study on the Implementation of a Hub and Spoke Program in Southern Maryland.](#)"
 - **Proposed Tax Credit Incentive:** A key component of the Hub and Spoke model is an economic incentive for farmers to donate food that would reimburse a portion of the harvest, packaging, and delivery costs. The Task Force recommended a state tax credit of 50% of wholesale value for eligible farm donations from conventional farms and a 75% tax credit for certified organic products. This was introduced to the Maryland legislature as a bill, which did not make it through in 2014. It will be reintroduced in 2015.
- [Farming 4 Hunger](#) In spite of the tax bill set-back, the program took steps to begin the Hub and Spoke program. Farming 4 Hunger (F4H), a non-profit run by Bernie Fowler Jr., served as the central Hub in Charles County. In partnership with the food banks and churches, F4H has been growing and distributing potatoes, green beans and corn to the hunger community since 2012. In 2013, F4H delivered 1.6 million pounds to the hunger community. In 2014, F4H became the Hub location and now partners with 11 farms in the area.
- [Maps](#): As part of the program, SMADC recommended new ways of identifying areas of need and food deserts based on school data, and developed maps showing public transportation lines, schools, food distribution sites, and grocery stores through Southern Maryland Food Maps. SMADC works w with the Johns Hopkins University Center for a Livable Future to create in-depth food maps for the five counties of Southern Maryland.
- [Southern Maryland Food Council](#): The Southern Maryland Food Council is made up of key regional food stakeholders (such as anti-hunger groups, educators, gardeners, farmers, environmental non-profits, social service

workers, retail stores, interested citizens, etc.). The Council is focused on enhancing the sustainability and health of the environment, economy and communities in the Southern Maryland region through stakeholder networking, project planning and development. The Council is currently administered by SMADC. The Council is not a legal entity and is composed entirely of volunteers.

**Source of information: generated from the websites (www.smadc.com) and (<https://farming4hunger.com/>) and directly from Christine Bergmark, SMADC and Bernie Fowler, Jr., Farming 4 Hunger.*

Additional Resources to the Maryland Food Supply Chain

Maryland Food Center Authority (MFCA), Jessup, Maryland

- a. Model: Privately held business
- b. Years in Operation:
- c. Scale: Suppliers and consumers are from Maryland and Virginia
- d. Status:
 - ✓ Wholesale distribution site
- e. Additional Information: The MFCA is dedicated to combining the very best in public and private efforts in planning and developing regional food industry facilities throughout Maryland. New and revitalized ventures under the MFCA's jurisdiction continue to generate employment and economic benefits throughout the State of Maryland. As a geographically centralized distribution hub dedicated to food distribution, the Maryland Food Center maximizes the efficiency of the food industry and ensures Maryland's future food supply.

Maryland Wholesale Auctions

Cheltenham Cheltenham, MD

- a. Model: Wholesale auction
- b. Years in operation: 25
- c. Scale: wholesale produce auction for producer growers and buyers from MD and VA, open seasonally, auction system pricing
- d. Status:
 - ✓ Wholesale distribution site

Loveville Produce Auction Loveville, MD

- Model: Wholesale auction
- Years in operation: Approximately 8 years
- Scale: Wholesale produce auction for producer growers and buyers from MD and VA, open seasonally, auction system pricing
- Status:
 - ✓ Wholesale distribution site

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For more information about this report:

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) is committed to: a) a market-driven and sustainable farming future as Maryland transitions away from tobacco. b) a Maryland where farmland preservation, and environmental stewardship positively impact the quality of our air and water and c) cultivating awareness among consumers and leaders of the vital role our farms play in a balanced community, safe, nutritious food and a cleaner and healthier environment. To learn more about additional programs and resources, contact SMADC, P. O. Box 745, Hughesville, MD 20637; phone: 301-274-1922, Ex. 1, fax: 301-274-1924; email cbergmark@smadc.com; or visit www.smadc.com.