



ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS: TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING AHEAD



Rich Pirog, Senior Associate Director – CRFS
Jeff O’Hara, Economist - UCS



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

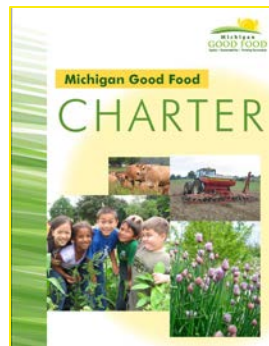


Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

MSU Center for Regional Food Systems

Mission: Engage the people of Michigan, the United States, and the world in applied research, education and outreach to develop regionally integrated, sustainable regional food systems

Work: Michigan Good Food Charter, food access and health, farm to institution, food hubs, food systems planning, organic production and marketing, regional food systems research and outreach



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Get Involved!



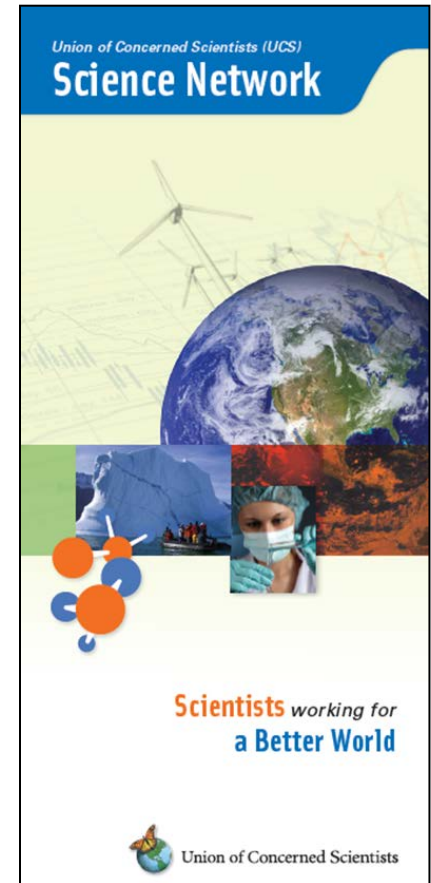
Union of Concerned Scientists

Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

Our networks make it easy for you to stay informed and communicate directly with the people currently making critical decisions that affect our planet.

Join the UCS Action Network
www.ucsusa.org/action

Or, if you are an expert,
Join the UCS Science Network
www.ucsusa.org/ScienceNetwork



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

Why bring economists together?

Purpose of meeting and document

- Maturation of the local food movement - building on the good work already done
- More questions and need for “proof” that local and regional food systems build strong economies
- Numerous ad-hoc studies of impact (jobs, income, economic multipliers) yet difficult to draw conclusions across these studies
- No formal “learning community” in place to review and critique the design, methods, and conclusions



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

Outputs and next steps

- 2 page brief – available now
- Academic-oriented paper - next step
- Continue the conversation – increase learning and scholarship in the work
- NOTE! – we realize social and other important benefits not considered (and should be)

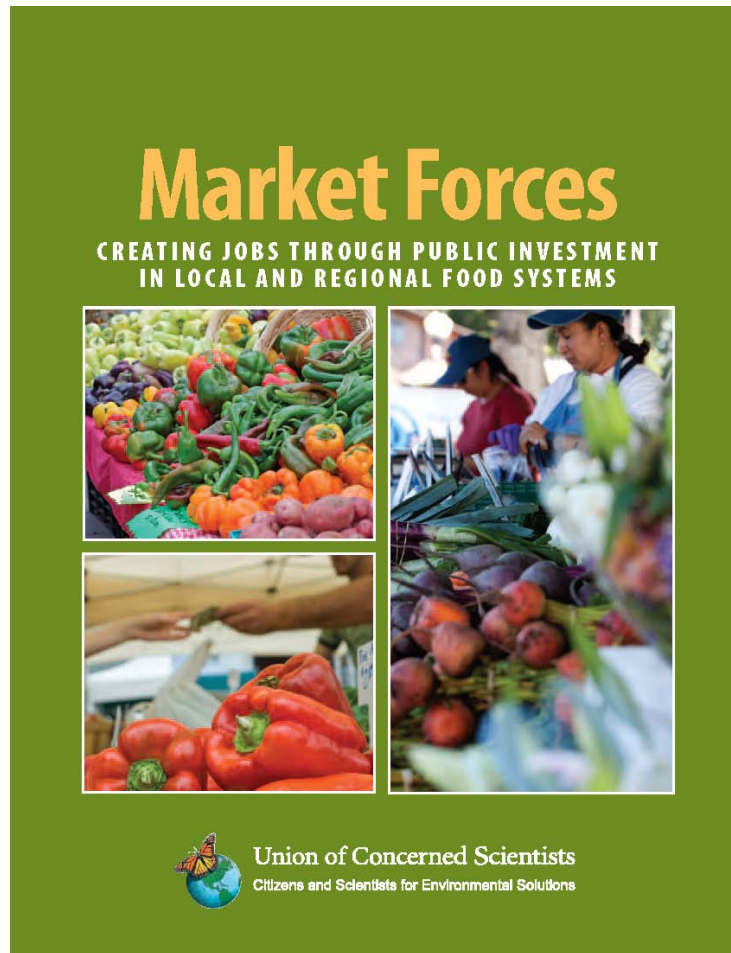


MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

Local Foods and Economic Impacts



What Evidence Supports This Claim?



MSU CENTER for REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists

Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

“Local Food Economics” Meeting



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

What's Been Done?

- Studies with narrow geographic /market scope
 - Farmers markets
 - Farm-to-school; “buy local” campaigns
 - Farm-level studies
- Larger geographic studies



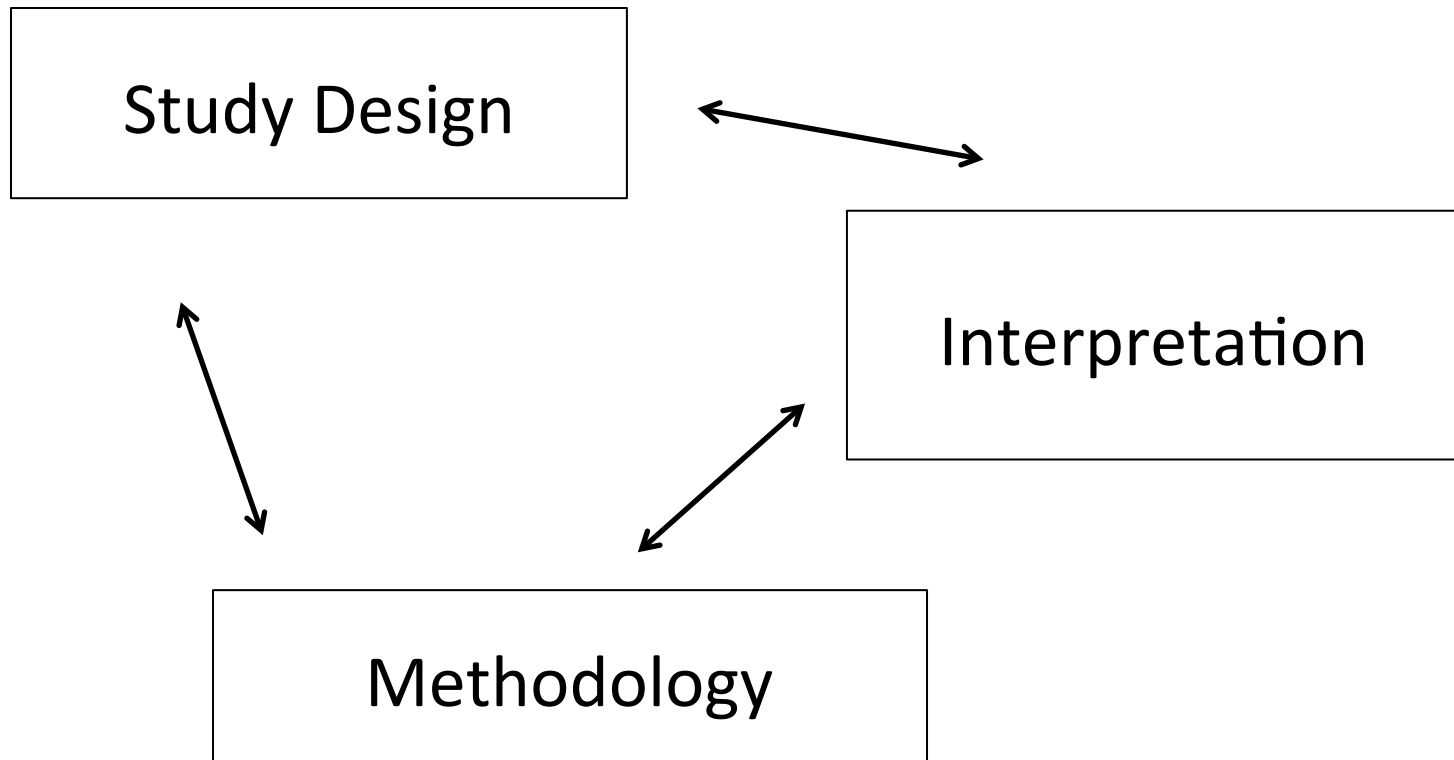
MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists

Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

How to Evaluate Existing Studies?



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

I. Study Design



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

II. Methodology



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

III. Interpretation



MSU CENTER for REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

Bottom Line

- Positive regional economic impacts of local food markets
- Economic impacts modest
- Many aspects of local food markets unmeasured



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists

Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

Research Priorities

- Data collection
- Larger-scale studies
- Economic research that goes beyond job-counting



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions

Questions to ask

(when commissioning a study)

- What are the goals of the study?
- Who is the audience?
- What geographic boundary conditions and markets will be evaluated in the study?
- What methods will the study investigators use?
- Are the study investigators well-versed with the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches?



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Questions to ask

(when commissioning a study)

- Are the study investigators willing to share the assumptions and methodologies used to conduct the analysis in a public report?
- Are there pre-existing data or studies representative of your community?
- To what extent do the results depend upon coordination or support from other regions?
- Do you have an advisory team of partners who can help guide the study in cooperation with the researcher?



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Next steps

- Academic-oriented paper
- Continue the conversation
- Other research studies and sessions
- Welcome your ideas and feedback to build scholarship and learning as we go forward



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

For MORE INFORMATION:

- Rich Pirog, Senior Associate Director – CRFS
- rspirog@msu.edu
- Jeff O'Hara, Economist – UCS
- johara@ucs.org



Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions



MSU CENTER *for* REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS