

Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network

What is a food hub?

Food hubs are centrally located facilities with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally source-identified food products (USDA-AMS working definition). Food hubs can be operated as a for-profit business, a non-profit organization, a cooperative, or one of many other business models.

Is there a food hub in my area?

Quite possibly, yes! There are currently 11 active food hubs in Michigan, from Marquette (the U.P. Food Exchange) to Battle Creek (Sprout Food Hub). Some hubs distribute statewide, while others focus on their local community. Most hubs supply local products to retailers, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and direct to consumers.

What types of products do hubs sell?

The majority of food hubs sell fresh fruits and vegetables in season, as well as fresh and frozen meat and poultry, dairy, eggs, and cheese. Some also stock value added products like breads, shelf-stable jams, sauces, and oils. A few hubs lightly process (e.g. chop or shred) and freeze produce for sale year round.

What are the goals of the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network?

- > Increased learning, innovation, and profitability for participating food hub and other regional food businesses
- > Increased access to food hub financial and technical assistance, research, and education
- > Increased business to business collaboration and trust across food hubs and other regional food businesses
- > Measurably increase healthy food access to low-income communities and vulnerable children in order to increase healthy outcomes
- > Increased collaboration among food and health agencies and organizations in Michigan to support food hubs

Map of Michigan's food hubs



What is the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network doing?

- > Convening three statewide food hub network meetings per year to create a space for learning and innovation in food hubs and regional food commerce
- > Maintaining a statewide listserv and an information page on the CRFS website
- > Responding to emerging food hub needs through regional and local food hub meetings, conferences, learning sessions, webinars, trainings, and context-specific tool development
- > Engaging and recruiting food hubs led by traditionally marginalized farmers and organizations representing food and health needs of low-income communities to participate and have leadership opportunities in all aspects of the network
- > Coordinating technical assistance resources related to the Michigan Good Food Fund
- > Working across food system networks (e.g. Michigan Farm to Institution Network) to create market opportunities for food hubs and increase access to Good Food
- > Providing scholarships and financial support to Michigan food hub managers to attend out of state trainings, conferences, and tours

Contact the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network co-conveners:

Noel Bielaczyc, Food Systems Specialist
 MSU Center for Regional Food Systems
 email: bielacz1@msu.edu
 phone: 517-432-0093

Rich Pirog, Director
 MSU Center for Regional Food Systems
 email: rspirog@msu.edu
 phone: 517-353-0694

Marty Gerencer, Principal
 Morse Marketing Connections, LLC
 email: marty.gerencer@gmail.com
 phone: 231-638-2981

Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network Webpage:

www.foodsystems.msu.edu/activities/food-hub-network

Statewide Contact List:

www.foodsystems.msu.edu/resources/mi-fh-contacts

Resources on Food Hubs:

www.ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs

To subscribe to the listserv for the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network, email listserv@list.msu.edu with "SUB MIFoodHub" and your name (e.g., SUB MIFoodHub Joe Smith) in the body of the email.

Primary financial support for the Michigan Food Hub Learning and Innovation Network is provided by the Kresge Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Network would like to thank the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for their continued partnership and support of food hub and regional food commerce resources to help Michigan food and farm businesses succeed.

