

SWIFFI Strategic Planning

Below are the core statements adopted at the Thursday, December 17, 2015 SWIFFI meeting at the Oakland Community Center. Initial discussion on the goals for the strategic planning part of the meeting led to consensus that SWIFFI members had had ample opportunities for input into the core statements and that what was decided at this meeting would serve until the annual review in Nov.-Dec. 2016.

SWIFFI Core Statements

The core statements explicitly describe key features of SWIFFI and how it operates. These statements serve to guide the activities undertaken jointly by the organization's members.

1. Description of who we are and who we represent:

The Southwest Iowa Food and Farming Initiative is a network of farmers, small-scale food processors, food sellers, Extension staff, educators, development professionals, social service and public health agency staff and citizens who are interested in a vibrant local food system that provides the people of southwest Iowa with safe and healthful food through ecosystem management, production, processing, distribution, and waste management practices that contribute both to socially cohesive and economically prosperous communities and to improving our natural resource base. It is coordinated by Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development and is a part of the Regional Food System Working Group network coordinated by Iowa State University Extension."

We share the understanding that the complex food system on which we all depend for life and for good health spans the biophysical and social worlds.¹ We recognize that this system is continually changing from both biophysical and social factors and that making good choices is critical for the food system to enable long term sustainability of our society.

2. Core Values Statement:

Values serve as the implicit and explicit standards for judging things and conditions that serve as important motivators of social action. SWIFFI members share numerous values; those on the list below are those that take priority in situations where values conflict with one another (e.g., stewardship and profit).²

¹ *The food system's biophysical foundation is the minerals, organic matter, and microorganisms of the soil and the climate and it includes the plants, fungi, and animals that we consume directly or serve other functions. Its social aspects include the human resource management, production, distribution, processing, consumption, and waste management practices and the knowledge and skills associated with those practices.*

²

Values considered but not included in the core values list: Inclusiveness (those in attendance felt that this value was manifested throughout the descriptions of other values); self-determination and profit were deemed not to be core values.

Value	Description as pertains to SWIFFI
Community	Having extensive social networks characterized by cooperative and mutually supporting social relationships, by conceptions of shared fate and identity, and by working together both to address problems and issues and to act on opportunities in ways that are collaborative and justly allocate the costs and benefits of the actions pursued.
Education	People of all ages and social situations having access to ample, diverse, and attractive opportunities to learn about the social and natural worlds, to become informed about issues, and to acquire useful skills, with particular emphasis on the food system and on food-related skills.
Health	People living lives free of disease, pain, and debilitating conditions; enabling them to be active, productive, and have long lives.
Local	Prioritizing all people in nearby geographic areas in allocating benefits of activities and in decision-making control (relates to principle of subsidiarity).
Stewardship	Managing local ecosystems in ways that result in human benefits, preserve ecosystem integrity, and maintain the ecological potential for continued productivity. (Relates to environmentalism, conservationism)
Sustainability	Having current yields and production practices that do not diminish the ecological and social potentials for long term yields. Sustainability is understood as a moving target requiring changes in practices as needed to adjust for changing social and ecological conditions. (Relates to resilience and stewardship)

3. Vision Statement:

This vision describes a future state of affairs that members of SWIFFI desire. It is unconstrained by practical realities of the present and it serves to motivate people to participate in SWIFFI's work.

The SWIFFI vision is a southwest Iowa regional food system that brings production, processing, distribution, and consumption into a unified system that supports health, food security, and community and economic development in the region.”

4. Mission:

A mission statement summarizes succinctly what an organization does.

The Southwest Iowa Food and Farm Initiative works to foster the social and physical infrastructure needed to realize its vision by acting as an information clearinghouse, educating and building relationships among producers, processors, distributors and consumers, and facilitating networks among food-related businesses.

5. Guiding principles of conducting SWIFFI business:

a. **Openness:** SWIFFI is open to participation by those with a broad range of views and situations in the food system and will provide a venue for civil, respectful, and thoughtful discussion and dialogue around evaluating diverging perspectives and considering proposed actions.

b. **Transparency:** SWIFFI will conduct its business in ways that give all regular participants notice about decisions to be made and will provide an open record of the rationales for decisions taken.

c. **Democracy:** SWIFFI will make decisions democratically through voting or consensus by those in attendance at meetings and by those who provide input on such decisions based on material provided in advance of meetings.

6. Strategic Goals and Projects:ⁱ

The strategic goals listed below are the agreed-upon priorities for SWIFFI. A specific activity is defined as a “project” and any specific project that is supported by SWIFFI under its plan of work must promote one or more of these goals.

a. Strengthen the “brand” by supporting, promoting, and providing information about local foods in the SWIFFI area

b. Strengthen food hubs

c. Provide value-added processing information and opportunities

d. Increase participation in SWIFFI

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- i Five-year goal
 - a living wage for farmers

The following ideas were deemed to be “projects” to be discussed at the January 2016 SWIFFI meeting:

Carl's Proposed goals (slightly edited, expanded, and probably distorted) for introductory discussion at the Dec. 17 meeting:

2016 Organize a SWIFFI producer cooperative for small scale food processing by southwest Iowa producers constituted to follow HACCP procedures in on-site handling, canning, dehydrating, packaging, freezing, refrigeration, and labeling of foods for farmer/co-op members to distribute.

2016 Have the Community Kitchen in Harlan open to producer members of the co-op.

2016 Establish a community commercial kitchen in Pottawattamie, Mills or Montgomery Counties, similar to the Harlan Kitchen.

2016 Establish an indoor Farmer's Market in Pottawattamie or Mills County to serve as a retail distribution outlet in SWIFFI region for fresh, refrigerated, frozen and canned produce of co-op members.

2017 Establish a SWIFFI regional honor roll of chefs and establishments sourcing a minimum (by dollar value) of 50% of their total food purchases (audited) from the SWIFFI Iowa counties.

2017 Establish a similar SWIFFI honor roll for Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, Saunders and Lancaster Counties, in conjunction with NSAS for the Nebraska Counties.

2016 Fund and reinvigorate the SW Iowa Buy Fresh, Buy Local chapter

2016 Under Buy Fresh, Buy Local, create directories of local food business, including producers, processors, distributors, retail outlets, and restaurants

SWIFFI Strategic Planning, 2016ⁱ: Addition to the Core Statements

This document amends the SWIFF Core Statements Document adopted in December 2015. Additions and changes were discussed and approved at the February and June 2016 SWIFFI meetings.

6. Strategic Goals and Projects:

The four strategic goals listed below (numbered 1-4 in the outline) are the priorities for SWIFFI agreed-upon at the December 2015 SWIFFI meeting. A specific activity is defined as a “project” and any specific project that is supported by SWIFFI under its plan of work must promote one or more of these goals. The projects below each goal (identified by lower case letters in the outline) were adopted at the February 12, 2016 SWIFFI meeting.

1. Strengthen the “brand” by supporting, promoting, and providing information about local foods in the SWIFFI area

- a. Fund and reinvigorate the SW Iowa Buy Fresh, Buy Local chapter.
- b. Under Buy Fresh, Buy Local, create directories of local food business, including producers, processors, distributors, retail outlets, and restaurants (including those in Omaha metro that meet the criterion of 50% of produce purchases from SWIFFI member producers).ⁱ
- c. Establish a SWIFFI regional honor roll of chefs and establishments sourcing a minimum (by dollar value) of 50% of their total food purchases (audited) from the

SWIFFI Iowa counties.

- d. Establish in conjunction with Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society (NSAS) a similar SWIFFI honor roll for Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, Saunders and Lancaster Counties.
- e. Support local food and farm events, including farm crawls and local foods dinners.

2. Strengthen wholesale producer marketing opportunities through food hubs and farm-to-school

- a. Include in newsletters the contact information for food hub operators headquartered in the SWIFFI Counties.ⁱ
- b. Print articles in the newsletter about food hubs and the kinds of produce being sought.
- c. Promote Farm to School by working with school districts and making connections with producers.

3. Provide value-added processing information and opportunities

- a. Organize a SWIFFI producer cooperative for small scale food processing by southwest Iowa producers constituted to follow HACCP procedures in on-site handling, canning, dehydrating, packaging, freezing, refrigeration, and labeling of foods for farmer/co-op members to distribute.
- b. Open the Community Kitchen in Harlan to producer members of the co-opⁱ
- c. Establish an indoor Farmer's Market in Pottawattamie or Mills County to serve as a retail distribution outlet in SWIFFI region for fresh, refrigerated, frozen and canned produce of co-op members.
- d. Support producer capacity for adding value to their products through increasing access to licensed commercial kitchens throughout the SWIFFI area.

4. Increase participation in SWIFFI

- a. Develop a public directory of SWIFFI members
- b. Survey members about what they need from SWIFFI and what it might contribute to them
- c. Institute a “bring a friend” program to encourage SWIFFI members to recruit other members
- d. Develop an Internet-based meeting system for some meetings to reduce travel time, especially for meetings early and late in the growing season.