

# **SNAP, WIC, and Nutrition Build Community Based Food Systems and Food Security**

Turning community supported agriculture into agriculture-supported community would allow community food security to thrive within the local food movement (Ackerman-Leist 2013). Community food security targets the local population and strives to, “make healthy, fresh food available to individuals, organizations, businesses, and government entities (Ackerman-Leist 2013).”

The food justice movement is present in Austin with organizations like Urban Roots, which targets lower-income families and troubled teens. The Sustainable Food Center (SFC) has created Farmer’s Market Incentive Programs (FMIPs) through the Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) to increase local food access among nutrition assistance beneficiaries (Jeanie Donovan 2013). They have also targeted mobile vending, community-based farm stands and grocery stores to reach beyond the farmers market (Jeanie Donovan 2013).

New policy recommendations include increasing electronic transfer benefits (EBT) availability at local food retail locations and making it mandatory for all farm stands and farmers markets (Jeanie Donovan 2013). This will be one of the biggest challenges because out of seventeen farmer’s markets/food stands in Austin only six are EBT equipped. Additionally Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)-enrolled and WIC (woman, infants, and children)

customers must be included in all the programs and locations in order for it to be the most effective (Jeanie Donovan 2013). However in order to be SNAP qualified one must apply to determine their eligibility and TBB (The Benefit Bank) assists our diverse population (Jeanie Donovan 2013). Installing EBT technology with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) program requires excess funding. Targeting public and private sources, available grants, annual reporting and reapplications can help sustain funding possibilities (Jeanie Donovan 2013).

Since other cities show the benefits of increased sales between SNAP customers as a result of FMIPs the SFC believes that this would be a successful program here. SFC doubles the value of SNAP, WIC, and FMNP benefits totaling up to \$20 per market per day through the Double Dollar Incentive Program (DDIP), but only for fruits and vegetables (Jeanie Donovan 2013). Consumers can save keep their incentives to use on other days as long as they use them by the end of the year.

By increasing the frequency of access for low-income consumers to obtain locally produced fruits and vegetables, the programs will redirect consumer spending to local agricultural producers (Jeanie Donovan 2013). This could also provide environmental opportunities like reducing food loss in conjunction with local composting programs and gleaning opportunities, as well as turning excess food into animal chow. It will decrease energy output by cutting transportation costs and minimizing distribution beyond a fifty mile radius. Direct market sales and relationship development between consumers and farmers will be socially beneficial. Additional education benefits will help individuals learn new life skills;

understand where their food comes from and empower better nutrition decisions.

## Works Cited

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Jeanie Donovan, Amy Madore, Megan Randall, Kate Vickery. *Farmers Market Incentive Program*. Policy Recommendations for Austin, Texas, Austin: Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, 2013.

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# Benefits of Using the Polyface Farm Model in Central Texas

Organic Red Hard Wheat growing in our largest garden bed and planted as the first crop to build the soil! We purchased this seed from [Thayer Feed and Seed LLC](#) at the Mother Earth News Fair in Kansas 2014.

There are many benefits to the Polyface Farm model. Joel Salatin isn't caught up in labels but believes in the essence of husbandry practices and stewardship (Salatin, *A New Old-Fashioned Food System* 2015). His model aides the local community with access to affordable food and he shares his knowledge with those willing to learn how to incorporate biodiversity while turning a profit. Central Texas is a difficult region to be a "grass farmer." Land varies depending on

the ecoregion and is a mix of rocky cavernous ridges, limestone, savannah, piney woods, and blackland prairies (Library of the University of Texas n.d.). Drought and a hot climate bring about other challenges that Salatin doesn't necessarily face in Virginia.

Salatin claims that his beef is “**salad bar beef**” because of the variety of leafy greens that are found in his fields (Salatin 2014). So every day he provides a different polyculture, diversified, paddock for nutrition which consists of dandelions, Kentucky blue grass, onion, narrow leaf plantain, wide leaf plantain, orchard grass, fescue, red clover, white clover, and buttercup (Salatin 2014). Although our region has the capacity to produce a variety of forage crops, different seasons really dictate what is grown but rebuilding the soil is a necessity.

Native grass seed by **Native American Seed** company would be introduced to the grazing system because it's what the buffalo used to forage, is extremely hardy, requires minimal watering and does well in Central Texas. We have access to organic feed from a local mill just a few miles away so it is ethically important we purchase soybean free, Non GMO feed from **Coyote Creek** as the most sustainable option. However gleaning food from other farmers and businesses is another great sustainable feed source that works well in a zero waste system.

A mixed farming system is sustainable as long as the number of animals and crops produced stays in balance with nature and production demands. A grazing pasture management system must be in place on any farm with livestock. Efficiently maintaining a sustainable pasture requires incorporating the forage-producing capacity and stocking rate to achieve the target level

of animal performance over time without causing deterioration of the pasture's ecosystem (David L. Greene 2002, 1).

Salatin grows on a large scale farming system and a smaller scale farm could; be more attainable; require less labor input; be more manageable; be financially feasible and sustainable. I also believe that food crops should be integrated in order to be more self sufficient. Salatin raises beef, chicken broiler meat, chicken eggs, rabbits, and pigs on between 100-500 acres (Pollan, Joel Salatin's Polyface Farm 2006). By reducing farm scale to accommodate smaller percentages of livestock while encouraging heritage breed diversification is imperative to the preservation of endangered species. In my experience, raising heritage breed chickens in Central Texas creates more resilient food systems. Reducing farm size would allow the farmer to have a better quality of life. (Pollan, Joel Salatin's Polyface Farm 2006). There is a demand for access to healthy and affordable food in Central Texas as well as markets to sell value added products through CSA, farmers markets, and restaurants (Austin Energy Depletion Risks Task Force, Roger Duncan 2009).

Austin needs to minimize food security issues in order to be more sustainable but Austin only represents a fraction of Central Texas. Having access to a farm store and being able to visit the farm to understand where your food comes from plays a crucial role in establishing a better food system. Building a farm brand using a sustainable whole farm model will encourage community members to become a part of the food movement. Educational opportunities aid in the development of future farmers which is essential to making our bioregion more sustainable.

**“When we say we are grass farmers, what we’re saying is we are honoring and producing the most historically normal, carbon cycle, nutritive cycle, energy cycle that is solar driven in real time and actually builds soil like nature has done forever (Salatin, Episode 516 – Polyface Farm 2014).”**

## **Bibliography**

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# Spring Fever=Ag+Edu+Bees+Onion Sprouting+Garden Seed Start Smarts

I seriously need to get with the program. Full swing in Grad school continuing my sustainability studies and ready for the semester to be over! Did I say that out loud? 9 credit hours was too much I think. I guess 6 hours is full time when getting your Masters degree; and mine is a curious blend of sorts; Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies-Sustainability Studies. With the possibility of moving I searched for other programs in the Houston area and none came close to this one. I do wish I was fortunate enough to be in another state that has better offerings for sustainability opportunities however I've gained a lot of experience in the field just by volunteering. The great thing however is that it's a new program at Texas State. I'm also a part of three projects in my first semester which is why I'm feeling slightly overwhelmed; I'm working full time as an Intervention Teacher for Elementary kids, and doing some nannyng, while continuing my KKCreations shop online; my husband says that's a hobby. I am forever hopeful that my endeavors will turn from passions and dreams into successful and profitable differences. One day! We pray! ☐

**SEAWEED STUDY** Did you know there's thousands of kinds of seaweed?! You may recall me discussing the marketing study I'm continuing for publication. The long term goal for this class; Specific Problems in Agriculture; Independent Study, is to help clean up the sargassum seaweed; brown seaweed that evades the Texas gulf coastline. If you have traveled among these areas you will notice the build up. The proposal is to combine brown seaweed with other natural compostable materials and

turn them into a marketable product; Seaweed Compost. The benefit would be shared by many; Texans wanting to contribute to education, cleaning up the ecosystem, gardening with compost that strengthens the drought tolerance of plants, supporting local products and jobs...sounds great right? There has been quite a deal of work put into it, in fact there is another student who has been trying to also turn the seaweed into an edible product. Got your juices flowing? Getting surveys completed has been a lot more difficult than I imagined! I've done a couple days at the Natural Gardener in Austin which has been quite lovely because of the people that I've met and spoken with about various topics. One customer posed several great questions that put me to the test about what's in seaweed and why or why not; would it be toxic? Especially from the oil spills a couple of years ago, and all the other pollution in our oceans. What do you think about that question? While becoming more curious about the scientific data myself, I came across this very interesting study :Chemical analysis and toxicity of seaweed extracts with inhibitory activity against tropical fruit anthracnose fungi; not what I was searching for but yet very interesting.

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT** My other projects involve Boots & Roots; Veterans Community Garden, Venture Entrepreneurship project that is also going to be a proposed new nonprofit business for the Austin community and Veterans. One of the approaches taken to boost revenue for the nonprofit is to get grant funding and have a vermiculture farm that can make worm composting products, earthworm castings, etc. It's a pretty intensive class; we've also been reading books like Innovation and Entrepreneurship, The Monk and the Riddle, and Running Lean. Some of the books can be pretty dry from time to time but all very useful tools for the new venture. My fave has by far been Drucker. The historical references he reflects on for innovative change are intriguing.

**AGRIVOLTAIC AGRICULTURE** My final project in Special Topics in



Agriculture is another study for publication. Based on previous studies done in France in 2011-2013. Renewable Energy, European Journal of Agronomy , and Agricultural and Forest Meteorology were all studies I reviewed in an effort to combine previous theories for successful biomass applications in Agrivoltaic systems. I go to the school farm on Friday to see what kind of layout I have to work with. This project will be the most learning curve of them all because I will have to build miniature field sets with photovoltaic opaque panels(solar) and have controlled crops to test in two seasons. Yikers. I'm still working out the kinks. We are thinking about using Chard as the main crop to test the soil, moisture in soil, and biomass. If anything else comes up like the leaf proportions, I may add that too. Please send me thoughts and suggestions on this topic because it will be probably the most challenging project for me to do; simply because I've never done a field experiment like this before.

**BEES** her Earth News this month was concerning the chemicals that are found in nursery purchased plants, they harm bees! So it's very important where you buy your plant starts from, especially if they are edibles. Read more on Cheryl Long's article on what I'm talking about online regarding Neonic "pesticides that spread thorough plants and contaminate pollen and nectar." As much as I love hardware stores that give veterans discounts; Lowe's and Home Depot were mentioned. I generally buy my plant starts at other local garden centers anyways. But love to get my hands on clearance non edible plants at Lowe's that are going to be thrown out. This article may change the way you buy your living green friends, to help take care of our little fuzzy friends. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=2vQ5PV-bNtM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=2vQ5PV-bNtM)

**GARDEN STARTS** I highly recommend going to the Sunshine Gardens spring sale March 1st in Austin to get your gardens ready. Bring cash and something to transport the plants with like a

wagon or cart. These community gardens are in the backyard for the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Another great way to support your local community and nonprofits! Learn more about them by watching this video. Sunshine Community

Other garden centers to visit this spring that offer affordable prices; Red Barn-love this place! AND they give military discounts, although they are north Austin they are worth the drive, they have a fantastic selection and are very friendly. Last year I got my onion starts there, Texas 1015 bunch for \$2.99-steal of a deal, and my red onions for the same, 120 in a bunch. So, if you have looked anywhere, online, catalog, and other places you won't find a deal like that unless you use your own onions as plant starts. We are doing that with some of our 1015s and red onions this year since I hadn't used them all and they started sprouting; I harvested them in May 2013 and they lasted until January! So our new sustainable garden start is using our own sprouted onions.

**SEEDS** I order seeds every year from various companies online. I get numerous catalogs in the mail, some of which I must discontinue since they send entirely too many. The most useful but somewhat expensive is Johnny's ; good company to support, employee owned. It's worth ordering a catalog because they give you an excellent and thorough description about what you're planting, the seed envelopes have entirely as much useful information on them as well. You could keep an old catalog for seed references because it's literally a little encyclopedia.

I also have gotten my tomato and pepper seeds from Tomato Growers Supply, and Burgess Seed Company. If I'm at Lowe's, yes I go to Lowe's, we save 10% always and we get great deals there, I may browse Seeds of Change organic seeds and Burpee Organic Seeds. This year I'm using a few new suppliers; Botanical Interests-killer deals on heirloom pole and organic seeds, Four Seasons Nursery-for inexpensive bulbs and bare root flowering bushes, Pinetree-unique herbs and fantastic

prices, Territorial Seed Company-many unique items including mushroom starts, rhizomes for hops, and soap making supplies, very inexpensive seed pricing! What's important to me when ordering seeds; non gmo, organic or a good second option, heirloom, zone specific, good insect plants, North American suppliers, company missions, quality products; free shipping, not outsourced-although I've found that some of the Midwestern garden supply companies are managed by the same companies of sorts and outsource customer service. I try not to use them for this reason because they don't understand what I'm talking about when dealing with plants.

Great fruit plant company I HIGHLY recommend Stark Bro's-guarantee to fruit, refund within the first year. Very happy with this company. I've purchased strawberry rhizomes, blueberry bushes, and grapes from them. Outstanding and personable customer service. Don't buy your fruit in a garden center when you can buy it online for much cheaper. Especially when it comes to strawberries, 25 shouldn't cost more than \$12.00, you can't buy that deal in a store anywhere.

p.s. Our chicken coop is almost ready and we are getting 4 Barred Rock Dual purpose chickens! Yeah! Look for updated photos in our Sustainable Projects link.

Gardens<http://www.motherearthnews.com/~media/Images/MEN/Editorial/Special%20Projects/Issues/2014/02-04/The%20Dangers%20of%20Neonicotinoid%20Pesticides/Flying-Honey-Bee%20jpg.jpg>