

# Local Food and Farm Task Force

The House Agriculture Committee passed legislation this week designed to increase locally grown food production in Iowa. Senate File 404 creates a Local Food and Farm Task Force to prepare a plan for expanding and supporting local food systems in Iowa and for assessing and overcoming obstacles necessary to increase locally grown food production.

A similar Illinois task force showed that a local farm-and-food development strategy could trigger \$20 to \$30 billion in new economic activity every year in Illinois, creating thousands of new jobs while revitalizing rural communities. The report noted that even small increases in the amount of

food grown for local consumption can generate an enormous amount of new economic activity, all within the state, for farmers and others in food-related businesses.

The bill creates a 24-member task force, made up of farmers, distributors of locally produced food, farmers markets, food retailers, community-based organizations interested in food access, and state agencies that regulate food. The individuals will be appointed by either the Governor or the Secretary of Agriculture.

The task force is to come up with a plan that among other things will identify the financial and technical support necessary to develop or expand

connections between landowners, farmers, buyers, and consumers; new food and agriculture-related businesses for local and organic food production and distribution; and farmers markets, roadside markets, and local grocery stores in unserved and underserved areas. The plan is to also identify legal impediments to local and organic food production, and develop recommendations for a remedy.

The task force must submit the plan to the general assembly by January 10, 2010. The bill has already passed the Senate and is now before the full House for consideration.