

**DEVELOPING CONSUMER ADVOCATES THROUGH PROACTIVE WORD OF
MOUTH MARKETING TECHNIQUES THEREBY CREATING
NEW MARKET AND DISTRIBUTION MODELS FOR LOCAL FOODS
FY 2008**

This project focused on ways to improve farmer income in Maine by developing consumer advocates to champion the farmers' cause by word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) by forming local food buying clubs. The WOMM approach proved successful in Maranacook, Maine. Young mothers with children, and baby boomers interested in buying local fresh healthy food and supporting local farmers, emerged as the most engaged advocates, and within 6 months over 50 families joined Maranacook's Local Foods Buying Club. Together they purchased over \$1,500 worth of food every two weeks from 17 local farmers. Farmers liked the buying club method of selling their products because they knew ahead of time how much of each product was needed each week, and there was one drop off delivery point. Farmers also liked the idea that the buying club managed the ordering system.

Another positive outcome of the project was that a local school was willing to host the club, and provided storage space and a place to receive deliveries and break down bulk products into individual orders. This arrangement worked well for the school too. Students had the opportunity to volunteer as part of their community service requirement, and teachers used the club activities to teach students about agriculture, food and nutrition.

To prove sustainability of the concept, the club needed to develop a formal organizational structure and find a way to pay overhead and operating expenses. Club members solved those challenges by forming an organization and affiliating with a non-profit as the fiscal agent. Members and farmers were charged annual fees to participate. Members also had the option to substitute their volunteer time and labor. The project has a promising future to expand as there are many school districts in Maine that support Farm to School activities and that could benefit from a local food buying club. Many small farmers would also benefit by gaining new local markets for their products.

FINAL REPORT

**Involvement of Maine Schools in Food Buying Clubs
Surveys
Operations Manual Template**

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**Developing Consumer Advocates through Proactive Word-of-Mouth
Marketing Techniques thereby Creating New Market and Distribution
Models for Local Foods**

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Final Report

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This project would not have been possible had it not been for the multitude of people who have dedicated themselves to help the farming community.



The vision for this project was first expressed by Tessa Burpee, past Executive Director of the Heart of Maine RC&D, and her former colleague, the late Vaughn Rasar, of USDA-NRCS. Their commitment to improving the lives of Maine's people, especially Maine's farmers, shaped their ability to dream big, work harder than most, and "make stuff happen." Tessa and Vaughn both came from a farm background, and understand the struggle to market good food and meet consumer demand. **Thank you Vaughn and Tessa.**

When this project started in 2007 only a few in other states were contemplating online ordering. Tessa immediately picked up on the possibilities, and, with the forward thinking of another non-profit, Western Mountains Alliance, a workshop and direction for this vision was born.

Another thanks to **Greg Franklin**, of GSFA Consulting, the marketing guru who taught us the term "aggregating the consumer" and the method of "telling your story". He knows what he is talking about, having grown up on a farm and currently helping his brother during the apple season park cars for the family apple farm in New Hampshire.

When it comes to supporting Food Buying Clubs, another visionary was the late **Jim Cook** of the Crown of Maine Organic Cooperative. Jim saw the possibilities of aggregating consumers at regional distribution locations. He based his idea on the 1970's food co-op model. Now, two generations of folks understand this idea -- the 1970's natural foods advocates and the 20 to 30 year olds, who want a closer connection to their local farmer and healthy food alternatives. Being one of the 1970 natural food advocates himself, Jim started distributing to newly formed buying groups in Portland and DownEast before this project took shape. Jim's daughter, Marada has continued his work. Thank you Jim and Marada.



I thank **Lauren Fish**, a past student of Maranacook Community School who spent a summer doing the market research at the school to find out if a club would work. Thanks also to Superintendent, Rich Abramson, a 70's Food Co-oper himself, who agreed to try a buying club at the school. Maranacook's policy is to work closely with the community and Rich opened the door wide.



I thank the food coordinators, **Gina LaMarche and Linda Nelson**, who did the work of getting the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club up and running, and getting community and local farmer support. They are the perfect match of two people of different generations. Each has owned and operated their own business (Gina a buying club and Linda an herb farm) and each understood the work required to make the project a success.



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Two other entrepreneurs made the software system work. **Jeremy Bloom** of Buying ClubSoftware.com, whose system came online last year, and Sky Mayhew, who continues to work out the bugs and adapt the ordering and tracking system on his system. It is not easy work to figure out how to do “split” orders, but they both did and now the BuyingClubSoftware system works well and Sky’s system is in beta test.

Finally, I want to thank the individuals and families of the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club who understand that joining together to purchase food from local farmers is good. Ultimately, I dedicate this project to the 18 or so farmers who understand how to tell their story, spread the word, and go after a good market when they see one!

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Summary

The Consumer Buying Club -Word of Mouth Marketing project focused on ways to improve the income of farmers from development of consumer advocates who would then champion the farmer's cause by word-of-mouth marketing. These champions would then form local food buying clubs and work with the farmer to sell the farmer's products to the members of the buying club.

The project was able to define the consumer profile of those that would support local farmers. These consumers were young mothers with children or baby boomers interested in local fresh healthy food and supporting local farmers. We were able to find advocates from each group who were willing to develop a buying club. In addition, the club tested new online ordering software which made ordering easy for the members. They could go online anytime within the week to order, and then pick up the order later in the week.

Success of the Word-of-Mouth marketing method was demonstrated within 6 months by the fact that over 50 families started participating in the Local Foods Buying Club. These families spent over \$1,500 in local food purchases every two weeks from 17 local farmers.

Farmers liked the buying club method of selling their product as they would know how much of each product was needed each week, and have one drop off point to deliver to. Farmers also liked the idea that the club would manage the ordering system.

One of the other positive outcomes of the project was the fact that a local school was willing to host the Local Foods Buying Club, giving them storage space and a place to receive deliveries and breakdown product into orders. This arrangement worked well for the school as students could volunteer time to assist as part of their community service requirement. Teachers could use the club activities as a way to teach students about agriculture, food and nutrition.

To prove sustainability of the concept, the Local Foods Buying Club needed to develop a formal organizational structure and be able to pay for overhead and operating expenses. Club members formed an organization affiliated with a non-profit as a fiscal agent. Members and farmers were charged annual fees for participation to cover overhead costs. Members who were not able to pay a fee could substitute volunteering to offset the fee.

The project may have a future as there are many school districts in Maine that are supporting Farm to School activities which could benefit from a local food buying club. Many small farmers may also benefit by having a local market for their products.

All the research results and supporting materials, including a draft operations manual are available at our *Farm Fresh For ME* website, www.fffme.com.

The Goal of This Project

The goal we intended to reach was to use Word-of-Mouth marketing strategies to aggregate consumers, and at the same time:

- 1) Help farmers expand their customer base and increase sales; and
- 2) Establish a model local foods buying club that allows farmers to reduce their marketing, labor, and transportation/distribution costs while making fresh, nutritious food more available and affordable to the consumer.

Background and Justification

The Market Barrier to Buy Local from the Consumer Perspective

More and more consumers are expressing an interest in buying local foods. Maine people, in general, support Maine farmers for a variety of reasons. They want to know where their food is coming from, to keep farms viable, to enjoy green fields & open space, and to maintain rural community values¹. Consumers want to have stronger connections with local farmers. A greater awareness of the importance of childhood nutrition is also driving more young mothers to seek higher quality foods at prices they can afford. Seniors are looking for fresher, local foods that taste good and bring back memories of their youth. Both groups are willing to pay slightly higher prices, for quality, convenience and easy access.

However, significant barriers exist to buying local. Consumers typically cite CONVENIENCE, ACCESS and PRICE as the key reasons they shop at grocery stores according to the recent Agricultural Creative Economy² report. Five market studies on consumer purchasing patterns from direct market farmers have been done: in Maine^{3,4}, New Hampshire⁵, Connecticut⁶, Nebraska and Oregon⁷. In the Maine study, high prices and quality were the top two reasons for not purchasing local produce.

In both the Maine and Nebraska studies, consumers were asked what would influence them to purchase more local products, and they highlighted availability, price and convenience as the major factors. In the Maine and New Hampshire studies, consumers said they would only travel between 5 to 10 miles for local produce. In New Hampshire, consumers said they would only travel up to 5 miles to a farmers' type market, and convenience of location was paramount to stopping and shopping there. Consumers do not want to travel to multiple outlets to find all the local foods they want. In these market studies, consumers also stated they did not know where to access the local farmers in their area. Consumers search for local information about farms which includes Word-of-Mouth, roadside signs, and newspapers. However, many farmers are outside the normal travel routes, or are in rural areas away from consumer service centers.

The Market Challenge - Getting More Consumers to Purchase Local Foods While Minimizing Marketing Costs From the Farmer Perspective

Farmers are struggling to find ways to market directly to consumers and make more money selling retail. Farmers turned to direct marketing to get away from selling wholesale and the low commodity prices in that market. Wholesaling small quantities do not cover costs. If a farmer moves to direct marketing he can receive higher prices which hopefully create higher profits.

In the past 5 years, Maine has seen a 250% increase in the agricultural sales that are direct to consumers. At present, over 800 farms, (10% of Maine's farms) sell direct to consumers. A University of Maine study surveyed 400 of these farms and found they generate about \$20 million in sales. The Department estimates that this sector generates about \$75 million per year in direct-to-consumer sales.

While direct marketing is increasing in Maine and the Northeast, from the farmer perspective, each of these marketing methods has drawbacks. The drawbacks include the time necessary for farmers to do the market outreach and advertising and the cost in time and labor to get to and from the markets. Farmers are finding that the travel, marketing and advertising costs associated with direct marketing can cut heavily into their profits.

Farmers who develop farmstands must conveniently locate them on a main road to get enough customer traffic. Costs for establishing direct market outlets in high real estate areas can be prohibitive for most small farmers. For farmers who do farmer's markets, this method may be more convenient for the consumer, but is a heavy labor and travel burden on the farmer. CSA marketing is a lower cost for the farmer, in that a core group of consumers can be developed at the beginning of the season, bringing in needed funds. However, farmers have to devote long hours to customer development and relations. CSA farmers are also limited to a local customer base, as many consumers do not want to travel far to a farm to pick up a weekly vegetable supply.

Direct market farmers are also constantly challenged to get more local consumers to frequent their farmstands, PYO operations, and farmers markets. Farmers are utilizing print and signage and special farm events to attract consumers to direct market outlets. They have even started CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) subscription-based farming to encourage local people to purchase direct from the farm and to provide more convenient distribution.

Some new alternative marketing methods are starting to meet consumer needs for convenience and assist the farmer. Perhaps the most profitable are CSA's where the farmer delivers to a central "hub" closer to the consumer. Some farmers have developed on-line ordering with strategically located drop-off sites in the nearby cities. Some farmers are doing home delivery on limited routes. Again, most of the burden for distribution and market development is still being borne by the farmers.

The Market Opportunity – Capitalizing on Word-of-Mouth Marketing (WOM) to Create New Consumer Demand

Word-of-Mouth creates consumer advocates

Consumer marketing surveys show that passive Word-of-Mouth promotion is the primary way consumers hear about when and where to purchase local produce. At a recent marketing workshop, farmers found that consumers look at the local weekly advertiser for coupons and then spread news of the farm products from one person to another and from families to families. In all three Maine market studies passive Word-of-Mouth was the most used method for consumers to find farms, farmers markets and CSA's. Even the current move to on-line ordering depends on passive Word-of-Mouth for consumers to know what farm has quality products and fair prices.

Using methods to encourage *proactive* Word-of-Mouth advertising is a new area of interest to the business world. A national Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association has formed over this marketing method and many large companies are now focusing on developing WOM and consumer advocates to push their brands.

As an example, Fiskars scissors used a process to boost their brand loyalty in the marketplace. Realizing that they needed to help their customers develop an emotional connection to their product, Fiskars worked with a South Carolina marketing firm, Brains On Fire, to identify people who were passionate about scrapbooking and who had a love for sharing what they know with others. They provided training on being an “ambassador” for their company and then turned them loose to spread goodwill on behalf of the company. As a result, stores that interacted with one of these ambassadors had three times the sales growth of others in the first quarter of 2007.

This new area of market promotion has great potential for farmers but training and experience is needed. Farmers who sell directly to the public know that WOM is important, but they typically do not know how to encourage WOM. They need help developing marketing tools and strategies that make it easier for their customers to go out and “spread the word.”

Consumer advocates create groups of potential buyers

Farmers could take better advantage of Word-of-Mouth. Once consumers are aware of the farmer, his products, and his story, they can be encouraged to form groups of folks they talk with to start buying clubs. They could be induced by reduced prices they pay for produce, and farmers developing better convenient drop-off locations. Many natural fits for developing buying clubs are where people naturally aggregate: neighborhood groups, schools, churches, granges, and town community centers as well as newer, on-line communities, and even Facebook or list serves of like minded friends.

Since consumers would organize themselves, and deal with ordering issues and collecting payment from members as a group, farmers would have a given source of market with a single point of contact and distribution. The farmer would also have minimal marketing and paperwork. Consumers could also purchase from a number of farmers or distributors, expanding the number and types of products available to them. The result could be the development of many small, community-based buying club distribution locations that could be accessed by many local farmers or food distributors (See appendix 1 for food cluster map).

Project Objectives and Strategies

Our objectives and strategies for this project were to:

1. Provide educational and networking opportunities for farmers to learn about and utilize Word-of-Mouth marketing techniques and understand consumer buying club market channels.
2. Establish consumer advocate groups and farmer partners in order to create model buying clubs.
3. Build a replicable organizational infrastructure for the buying clubs.

To assist farmers with understanding Word-of-Mouth and online ordering systems, we held workshops, presented at farmer events and talked individually with interested farmers. We showed how the buying club model had advantages over selling through roadside stands, farmer's markets and CSA's. We taught how the buying club model would lower marketing costs, create faster ordering, make for simpler payment, and create a single point market distribution location for them and distributors.

The method we employed for starting a buying club was to first conduct market research for the area we wished to set up as an aggregated site. We then developed a method to build general awareness in the community. Through our contacts with other existing buying clubs we defined a consumer profile and then entered the community to identify consumer advocates with those profiles who might be interested in leading a group.

Once the group organizers were established, we identified and contacted local farmers to see which ones might be willing to supply the aggregated market (buying club). Then we employed various Word-of-Mouth marketing (WOM) techniques to encourage local consumers to participate in the buying clubs. We also figured out what services were needed to best assist making the connection between farmers and consumers, such as with the use of on-line ordering and communication tools.

Once the club got started, we developed a formal structure for providing services to the buying club. Services included; WOM training, nutritional training, online ordering support, and infrastructure purchases support (scales, storage). We also continued to gather information on how the software would influence purchasing habits of consumers and the selling practices of the farmers. In addition, we made observations about the overall experience working with a school. By the end of the project, we worked with the club to establish a sustainable structure and function, utilizing our financial modeling tool and

technical assistance to set up the formal organization. We also conducted evaluation surveys at the end of the project.

Objective 1: Provide educational and networking opportunities for farmers to learn about and utilize Word-of-Mouth marketing techniques and understand consumer buying club market channels.

Building farmer awareness

In October, 2007 the Department and Heart of Maine RC&D held the first Word-of-Mouth Marketing (WOMM) Workshop. This workshop enlisted marketing experts in WOM, and conducted the first ever consumer focus group. The key take-away lessons mirrored the background section of this report. It was clear that consumers prefer to use and benefit from Word-of-Mouth advertising. The farmer's products and stories are what they like to talk about thus making word-of mouth a very powerful vehicle for increasing sales of locally produced food.

In the fall of 2008 the first conference was held to help farmers understand the use of the internet for online ordering. One new piece of software was highlighted at the event. It was developed in New Hampshire, called *Plymouth Local Foods* and was being used in Maine in the Farmington area. We also found that some farmers in DownEast Maine and Portland were also developing local food buying clubs. We contacted one farmer, Carly Delsignore and Aaron Bell of Tide Mill Farm in Edmunds, Maine. They had already found a few consumer advocates and were delivering to locations in three area towns. They were using a rudimentary excel spreadsheet and email system to take orders. We invited them to discuss their experiences. The take home messages from that workshop were:

- A market does exist for purchasing local products online, although the market has not been thoroughly tested.
- The online ordering software was rudimentary, and did not handle "splits" (splitting up a wholesale lot into individual orders).
- The type of consumers who would go to a farmers market may be the target customer for online ordering.
- Aggregating the market can occur by creating "drop off points" where the consumer is aggregated naturally. Farmer's markets are a potential site, but so is a consumer's house where they have formed informal buying clubs.

During the late fall (2008) and winter (2009), a series of follow-up workshops were held at the Maine Agricultural Trade Show and the New England Direct Marketing Conference. At least one workshop was held on new, online ordering methods. Over 80 farmers participated in that workshop, which featured Tide Mill Farms, Idaho Bounty and others. At that meeting we connected with Fresh Fork, out of Cleveland, Ohio, who also was using online software to aggregate supply and markets.

By the summer and fall of 2009 more farmer interest was gathering and a statewide forum was held in Portland Maine to discuss online ordering systems. There were many farmers at that

forum, and the consensus was that a statewide ordering system would not work because a statewide online market would potentially cause market disruption by open competitive pricing, and a statewide online market had no central authority controlling the market and no association/entity was recognized that could do so.

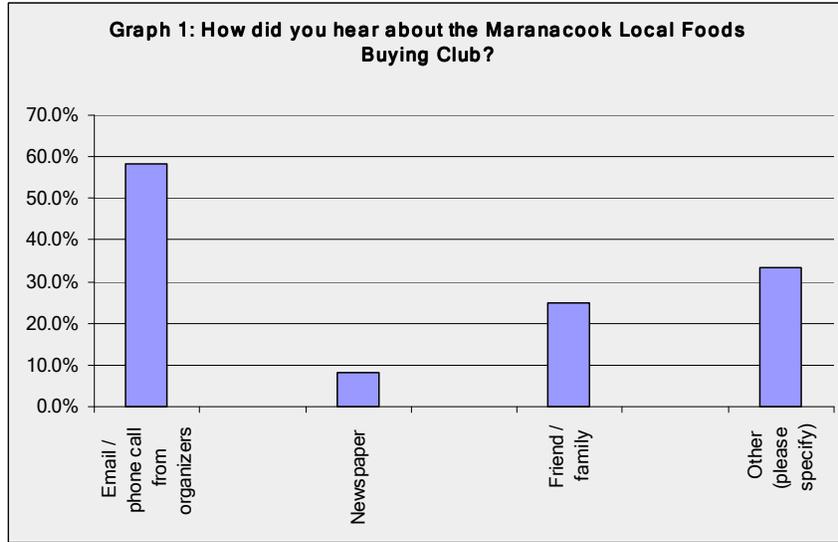
Gaining farmer interest

By the winter of 2009-2010 we set up at the Maine Agricultural Trade show and provided information on a number of systems that were getting started, including general promotional websites *GetRealGetMaine*, *Ag and Food Trader*, *Western Maine Market*, as well as our project, *Farm Fresh For ME*. Building farmer interest in developing a buying club continued into 2010. In February of 2010 we held a second farmers workshop inviting Joe Salatin of [Polyface Farm](#) in [Swoope, Virginia](#), in the [Shenandoah Valley](#) as inspirational keynote speaker. Joe's farm is featured prominently in [Michael Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma](#) (2006) and the documentary films, [Food, Inc.](#) and [Fresh](#). He used many WOM techniques and supported the use of buying clubs to market farm products. Over 90 farms were represented at the workshop. We also gave a talk at the Statewide Farmers Market Convention in March of 2010. Over 50 farmer's market representatives came to the workshop and discussed ways to do online ordering.

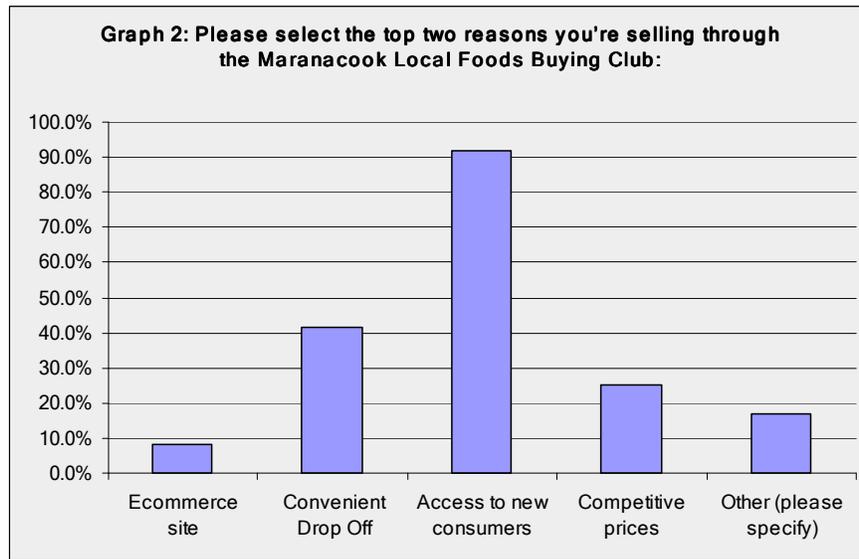
Farmers make the leap and link up with *Farm Fresh For ME*

While all these efforts were going on, the pilot project *Farm Fresh For ME* was getting off the ground. Two consumer advocates were found in the Readfield area of the Belgrade Lakes region of Maine to champion the school buying club model. Farmer's names in the area were collected from Department of Agriculture lists, and they were contacted by the two local consumer food advocates to see if they would participate in a local food buying club.

The goal of building interest and participation of farmers in the pilot had been reached by the time the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club (MLFBC) began operations in the summer and fall of 2011. A number of the farmers who had attended these workshops were ready to work with MLFBC. Some had heard of the buying club movement, so had their interest piqued. A summary of how they found out about the club is shown in Graph 1. Of interest is that a few farmers said their customers asked them to participate in the food buying club. CONSUMERS were driving the marketing process, not the farmer.



After a few order cycles, farmers were surveyed⁸ to assess the experience with the club. 100% were very satisfied. As expected, the farmer’s reasons for wanting to continue to participate related to gaining new customer contacts and potential sales (Graph 2).



In the fall of 2011, the Department and Western Mountains Alliance held the final workshop. By this time, knowledgeable farmers in Maine were beginning to use social media as the ultimate WOM method. Online ordering systems were getting more advanced, and the conference focused on those tools. A keynote speaker, Rich Brook of *Flyte New Media*, presented information on how to use social media. Developer panels talked about their online ordering systems, and farmers shared their experiences with using the web for marketing.

The take-away messages from this workshop were that online ordering has arrived, computer-based communities using social media are the new vehicle for Word-Of-Mouth advertising, but good, old-fashion gathering of consumers to buy from local farmers still works as well.

Objective 2: Build consumer advocates around local food benefits, health and nutrition.

Market research – Building a consumer profile of a food buying club consumer advocate

The objective of this portion of the project was to find and develop consumer advocates for purchasing local food. We initially planned on selecting an area or business location in which we would conduct Word-of-Mouth marketing techniques to attract customers and then have them set up a food buying club. We thought that doing WOM campaigns by holding farmer tours, conducting cooking classes, nutrition education programs, food films, and meet your farmer events etc would assist us in exciting an individual or group.

However, we found out differently. We found out that a number of buying clubs existed in DownEast Maine whose families were already purchasing local and out of state products and health foods. We also found that a number of families from the local church, which the project manager attended, were becoming interested just by Word-of-Mouth about key terms used in the project. We decided to contact and interview a number of these buying clubs members from DownEast to ascertain why they had interest in buying local foods. We also decided to hold a focus group of the church members and close friends of the project manager to see what made them interested and what constraints they saw in purchase local fresh produce. Finally, when we decided on the Maranacook School as the pilot location, we conducted a survey of the families who were signing up to order to see if our assumptions and observations were accurate.

The Bangor focus group and DownEast buying club coordinator focus group yielded the following information about what their interests were in purchasing from local farmers. These included:

- Interest in healthier food for the family and local was perceived in that way.
- The need to support local farmers.
- Food must be convenient to order.
- Food prices must be 5-10% below retail grocery store to be worth while
- Cannot commit to running a buying club...too busy.

These individuals already had some contact with local farmers through farm visits. Some were already purchasing from local farmers. Some had the perception that locally produced food was more healthy. Some had general knowledge about supporting local through local advertising by Maine farmers.

By further evaluating the consumers in the DownEast food buying clubs we found that they fell into two clear categories of consumer:

- Young mothers with children, college educated, very sensitive to the need for healthy food alternatives for their children.
- Boomer generation women who had previously participated in Food Coops in the 1970's and 80's and wanted to revive the movement, get more local, healthy food products and support local farmers.

Once we more fully understood the consumer profile we started the search for a Food Club Coordinator for the pilot. Two individuals came forward that bridged the profile, a young mother with children in the school district, and a boomer with experience and awareness of the local food movement. Both were experienced with food buying clubs as the mother had operated a buying club in another part of the state and the boomer had been part of a buying club in another state. These characteristics were important to the success of the project.

As the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club pilot project got underway we also conducted a survey of the members who had been attracted to the club to see if their profile matched the consumer profile. While the survey results were small the survey confirmed that we had a spread of consumers, from young to older, to families with children to empty nesters to later generation boomers. All had two major characteristics, they were educated about food, and they wanted to support local. A full summary of the survey results can be found in the attachment to this report.

A Word about place, consumer aggregation and schools as a logical site for distribution

When we first conducted market research into the types of places where people congregate, we focused in the Bangor area. We researched the following types of locations:

- Granges
- Hospitals
- Churches
- Health food stores
- Sports Gyms
- Community Centers

We found that all these locations had promise, as they were locations that would typically have folks who may be interested in good health. While these locations and businesses were identified, we eventually settled on a school system. We wanted to focus on young mothers with children as this was the demographic group which was strongest in the DownEast buying club.

We employed a college student to conduct research at a secondary school district she had previously attended. We wanted to see what interest and constraints there might be to starting a buying club at the school. She conducted informational interviews with all the key administrators of the school system, as well as teachers, students, food service and parents. The results of that research are in an attached research report⁹.

Of interest to the success of developing the buying club at the school location was the support of the school board and the superintendent. The school had a policy of supporting community sponsored events and projects. In addition the superintendent was in the customer profile of baby boomer, college educated, and with prior experience with food cooperatives in the 1970's, therefore he was very supportive. We believe not all school districts may have those qualities. More research is needed if the project is to be expanded to other school districts.

Promotion - communicating with the customer

The Word-of-Mouth message - The original objectives for this project were to see which types of Word-of-Mouth methods would attract consumers to become food advocates and join a food buying club. The assumptions were that they would need a series of workshops on nutrition and the relationship between soil health, human health and farms along with networking opportunities between the consumers and farmers. In addition we thought that cooking classes, pot luck dinners using local foods, farmer visits to consumer locations, farm visits by the consumers to the farms, along with a number of other educational tools would encourage consumers to understand and promote the food and farms and join the buying clubs.

We found that not all these methods were necessary or important. After understanding the consumer profile, written promotional materials were deemed the most effective. A typical brochure is attached to this report. The messages on the brochures were developed with the messages most heard from the focus groups, including:

- Affordable access to local food
- Fresh, healthy, nutritious food
- Easy and convenient online ordering
- Local pickup
- Enrich the local economy by supporting our farmers

This was supported by the consumer survey¹⁰ of the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club after they got started (See Table 1).

Table 1: Please select the top two reasons you've used the Maranacook Buying Club:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Online ordering system	21.4%	3
Convenient Pick Up	14.3%	2
Access to locally produced foods	78.6%	11
Farmers are known to you	0.0%	0
Support for area farmers	64.3%	9
Competitive prices	0.0%	0
Product freshness / quality	14.3%	2
Produce Selection	0.0%	0
Other ___	0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>	14
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

The communication system that worked - The Food Coordinator at Maranacook School utilized the school’s newsletter network to send out flyers and articles in to parents. She also held a meeting of interested families and provided a PowerPoint presentation about the program, how it works, and the benefits. This was well received.

Of interest was that most of the parents who attended that meeting were well aware of the messages she was conveying. They had laptop computers, another sign that the younger generation of mothers was well connected and familiar with using technology.

The food coordinator also started a Facebook page. The consumer focus groups had identified Facebook as a valuable communications tool for young mothers with children along with frequent email updates using constant contact or just regular email. These very handy communication vehicles, along with the school newsletter, were very powerful ways to promote and encourage participation.

The food coordinator also developed a “meet the farmer” evening at one of the pickup times. During one month when the online ordering system was down, she coordinated a series of days for a winter farmers market. Both types of events were well received by the customers, but was not the primary motivator to join or advocate for the club.

The food coordinator also met with local town officials and the wellness committee for the school. Both groups were supportive of the messages and provided support and willingness to promote the messages to their constituencies.

Once the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club had started selling farmer produce, Word-of-Mouth increased very quickly. The messages resonated and the quality and pricing of the products sold themselves. When the survey was done, however, it was amazing how many members found out about the club through the newspaper (See Table 2). The second highest was Word-of-Mouth!

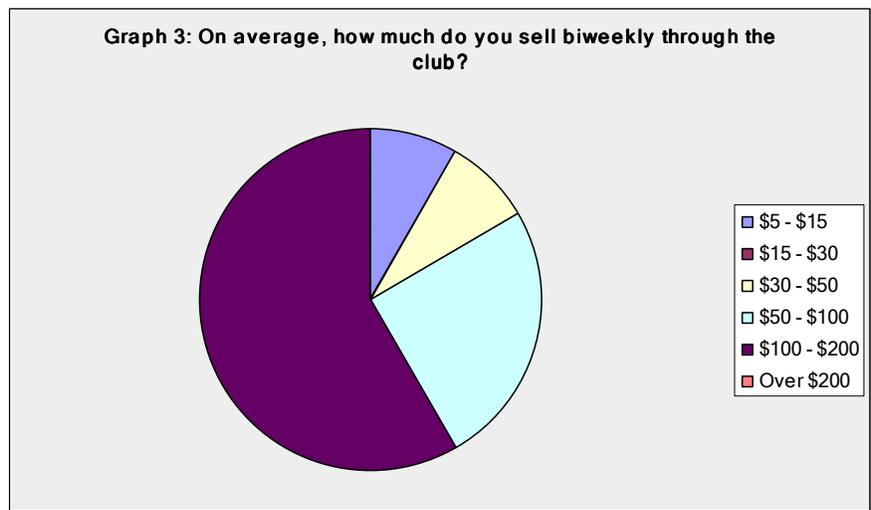
Table 2: How did you hear about the Maranacook Online Buying Club? Please check all that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Email from organizers	7.7%	1
School Flyer	7.7%	1
Newspaper	61.5%	8
Facebook	7.7%	1
Friend / family	30.8%	4
School Event	0.0%	0
Other _____	15.4%	2
answered question		13
skipped question		1

The initial ordering cycle had 20 families involved but within a month 125 families were interested in the program. The power of a good product and service coupled with simple advertising in the local paper and customer-to-customer Word-of-Mouth cannot be underestimated.

The sales results – did the marketing message translate into sales to farmers

After a number of buying cycles for the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club, a survey was taken to see how the farmers did. The results are summarized in the attached Farmer Survey report¹¹ and in the follow chart. In general farmers did very well.



Objective 3: Build organizational infrastructure for the buying club

Another objective of this project was to see if there was a way to develop an organization that consumers could look to in order to assist them in forming a buying club. This involved looking into how a buying club functions and what services they needed, and an analysis of how best to deliver those services. In addition, we looked at the buying club and how it could become financially self-sustaining.

Researching the needs

We started the process by finding websites which provided information on how to start buying clubs. Through this research we found out what problems existed in conducting buying clubs with local farmers, and how those buying clubs are finding farmers to supply them. This gave us a list of services we needed to help foster new buying clubs.

The service areas we identified and focused on were:

- Overseeing fiscal matters and capital purchases for multiple buying clubs.
- Locating farmers.
- Managing online ordering system to make purchasing convenient.
- Strategic planning for the buying club so that they could evaluate how to run and finance the club sustainably.

In the fall of the first year we contacted Local Foods Plymouth, Idaho Bounty, Philadelphia Farm to City, and MyPersonalFarmers.com owners. We interviewed and evaluated their organizational structure, their use of online ordering systems and methods of expanding into multiple market distribution areas. This process was very helpful in order to not make the same mistakes they made in their programs. Each representative from those organizations was very helpful. Each of these organizations had found limitations, mainly in:

- Dollars to support the administrative expenses
- An online ordering system that cannot easily handle multiple markets, splits, and easy reporting functions to suppliers and consumers.
- Challenges with pricing products to deal with distribution and marketing.

We researched other efforts developing around the country. LocalDirt.com and Farmsreach.com were two food aggregation and online purchasing systems being developed. FoodHub was also getting started on the west coast. Most of these systems were for matchmaking, and not for the detailed organizational structures needed at the local level.

We continued to investigate the needs of local buying clubs by holding a focus group with the DownEast Buying Clubs associated with Tide Mill Farm. They reiterated that Buying Clubs, when first started, needed capital equipment such as scales, refrigerators, freezers, packing

supplies and computers to manage bookkeeping and bookkeeping systems. They also needed on-going technical support to manage the bookkeeping and online ordering software.

It became clear that a services-oriented organization or business may have a place to assist buying club development.

Researching the Entity

Farm Fresh For ME L3C- The original vision was to establish an entity which would become an umbrella organization attached to either a non-profit organization or functioning as its own for-profit entity. The Department development philosophy is to support for-profit business development, not to increase government programs if this entity were to be sustainable.

The Department worked with the RC&D and a lawyer to get advice on what might be a good organizational structure. At the time, a new form of entity was gaining use called an L3C. These forms of business function at lower levels of profitability, and can accept grants and philanthropic owners as well. The Department and Executive Director of the RC&D decided to develop a brand for the project, and applied it to the L3C and the website, calling the initiative *Farm Fresh For ME*.

The services of the proposed entity were taking shape. The Executive Director had secured foundation funds to support capital purchases of scales, refrigeration and distribution vehicles for participating buying clubs. The business model being developed was an entity which would provide low interest loans to the clubs, or free use of equipment with the concept that once the buying club made money, or expanded beyond the size of the borrowed equipment, the equipment would be passed on to newer forming buying clubs. The entity would assist buying clubs in meeting the goal to be profitable and sustainable. A key provision would be that the buying club would have to support administrative costs of the umbrella L3C entity so that the L3C entity could also remain profitable, albeit at a low level.

A note about online ordering systems - While it was not the purpose of this grant to develop the online ordering program, we had found it necessary to have one available, as it was one of the purposes of the project to meet the convenient ordering needs expressed by the consumers we wanted to attract to a food buying club. The marketplace for online systems in 2007 was very limited.

The Heart of Maine RC&D, with Department support, worked on development of a system to use with this project. We felt the umbrella organization could manage the online system. Online ordering systems were evaluated, including Fresh Fork, Idaho Bounty, Philadelphia, Local Dirt and Harvest to Market. Each one of these systems still had flaws we hoped to overcome. Splits are one issue. A “split” is when a wholesale lot does not command enough buyers for the lot. The split (or remaining order minimum) needs to be made up by someone or else the wholesale lot is not purchased. How to handle those orders online is not easy.

Another private Maine company had developed software that handled splits but was not fully deployed by the start of this project. By the time the true pilot test for the MLFBC was nearing, the Department engaged with Western Mountains Alliance to develop another software product. It is in its beta testing mode as we end this project. However, for the purposes of this project, we eventually utilized BuyingClubSoftware.com as they came online “just in time” for the pilot test of the club.

Researching the other free market alternatives to support buying clubs

Distributor Driven Services Model

Fresh Fork was a company managing an online ordering system and distribution business. Fresh Fork was an early consultant to this project. The owner had developed a successful distribution company, playing the middleman between the farmers and the consumers, and doing it in the online world. The company was expanding to multiple distribution drop-off points, but was not necessarily developing individual buying clubs. Rather he was reaching out to individual consumers and other wholesale accounts to institutions, restaurants and health food stores. His business model had some of the elements of a full-fledged service company, but not all of those needs were able to be met for our purposes.

Crown of Maine Cooperative (COMOC) is a Maine distribution company targeting buying clubs and developing market relations with over 20 small clubs in DownEast and Southern Maine. The late Jim Cook, the owner, had a vision that aggregating folks in groups had promise, much like the food coop movement of the 1970’s. He worked with a group in Portland Maine, the Portland Food Coop and delivered organic produce twice monthly to over 50 area residents. The closing of a popular local health food store, and the establishment of a competitor, of which some of the Portland Group did not appreciate, motivated the Portland group. The goal of the group was to form their own, direct market, with farmers. Crown of Maine sources all of its products from Maine farmers, and was the perfect match. This was the first consumer driven food buying club model in Maine making a concerted effort to access local products. They set the example and backdrop to this project.

The distributor was helping pay for buying clubs to get online, and helping them by aggregating the farmers to supply the club. However, it was found that distributors cannot possibly have the capacity to provide the entire services necessary to assist food buying clubs.

Farmer-Driven Services Models

Tide Mill Farm, Edmunds Maine – Carly Delsignore and Aaron Bell championed the cause of buying clubs in DownEast Maine with the help of families in Machias, Eastport, Calais and Lubec. They were delivering to homes in those areas. The customers were gathering friends and relations to purchase fresh milk, cheeses, vegetables and meats. Carly and Aaron were swamped with orders and record keeping was a time consuming process with excel spreadsheets and QuickBooks. Delivery schedules were also quite demanding, and they even provided home

delivery in some cases. Tide Mill Farm was heavily customer focused, and that paid dividends as the clubs built orders. The buying clubs were loosely organized around a central food coordinator who handled the ordering and the books for the club. By 2011 the DownEast buying clubs added additional farmers who had seen the success of Tide Mill Farm.

Western Maine Market was a demonstration online buying club project of Western Mountains Alliance, this project started in 2008, originally using software developed for the Plymouth Local Foods model and then transitioning to an earlier version of the current *Harvest to Market ONLINE™* ordering system from New Hampshire. Tanya Swain, Tricia Cook, Deborah Chadbourne and many others made this market work. This online market was envisioned in the Plymouth model as an add-on to a normal farmer's market where the consumer ordered their products ahead of time and picked up at the farmers market. The Western Maine Market pilot originally partnered with a local grocer to offer a pick up at the store's downtown location.

Cape Farms' Market, located in Cape Elizabeth and operated by Penny Jordan of Jordan Farms had been researching online ordering and started her own online ordering system. Initially geared to helping her customers order products online and pick up at the farmstand, Penny expanded the offerings to other farmer's products, and to a number of drop-off points around the city. She utilized a Zen-Cart type system set up by Jeremy Bloom, creator of BuyingClubSoftware.com, another new online ordering system (described later). This model did not focus on buying clubs, per se, but rather individual consumers much like the Western Maine Market model.

Also prevalent was the use of email ordering and local drop-off points. One example was an ordering system started by **Freedom Farm, in Freedom Maine, and Thirty Mile Farm in Windsor Maine**. These farms were selling in the Portland Market and continued selling year-round by contacting their customers by email, and doing deliveries to drop off points in the city, 80 miles away.

Online Ordering Software Services Model

BuyingClubSoftware.com –is a business which primarily provides buying clubs with an online ordering system. Jeremy Bloom, creator of www.buyingclubsoftware.com, had established the company to implement his online ordering software and manage the transactions for buying clubs. This service was limited to the hosting and technical assistance to setup and manage the system. He also provided promotional services through creating a website for the buying clubs. What was missing from this model was the management of capital needs, and market interactions between farmers and the buying club.

What Works Best

Through all this research and experimentation on ways to provide services to support buying clubs, it became clear that no one model would work perfectly for all the buying club needs. The L3C full services model, while grandiose in scale, may not be a profitable model as overhead expenses must be borne by either the supplier or consumer. The Wholesale Distributor and Farmer Driven models works only so far as the distributor can meet the product intermediary role and meet other service needs like providing the online ordering system. Both work to the benefit of the buying club.

However, a club needs more support for technical services and capital investment. The Buying Club Software services model works for only limited servicing for the online ordering club, and cannot exist in the vacuum without the other services for supply purchasing and capital investment and financial management.

For the buying club movement to be successful, more work is needed for easy procurement methods, ordering efficiency and ease of distribution (storage and breakdown) of perishable commodities. This is much different than in the 1970's when the major buying club movement was for more stable goods such as dried fruits, nuts, flour and herbal products. This movement is also different than the 1980's and current day model of Wholesale and Farmer Driven distribution models where they provide most of the supply and ordering support. While an umbrella organization may work, most likely a combination of methods will show up in the marketplace.

Objective 4: Building A Sustainable Local Foods Buying Club Model That Works

Challenges defined

For a Local Foods Buying Club to be its own independent entity is a challenge. The challenges are:

- To obtain capital for operating the club and overhead investment for cold storage to minimize food safety concerns of government regulators.
- To meet customer needs for convenience of ordering, minimal volunteer work effort for busy moms and professional couples, but maintaining the feel of community.
- To form a governing entity which can perform like a business while maintaining the “feel of” a volunteer, grass-roots community organization.
- To create an entity that is able to independently source fresh food from a wide array of local farms, independent of distributors, and with minimal overhead.

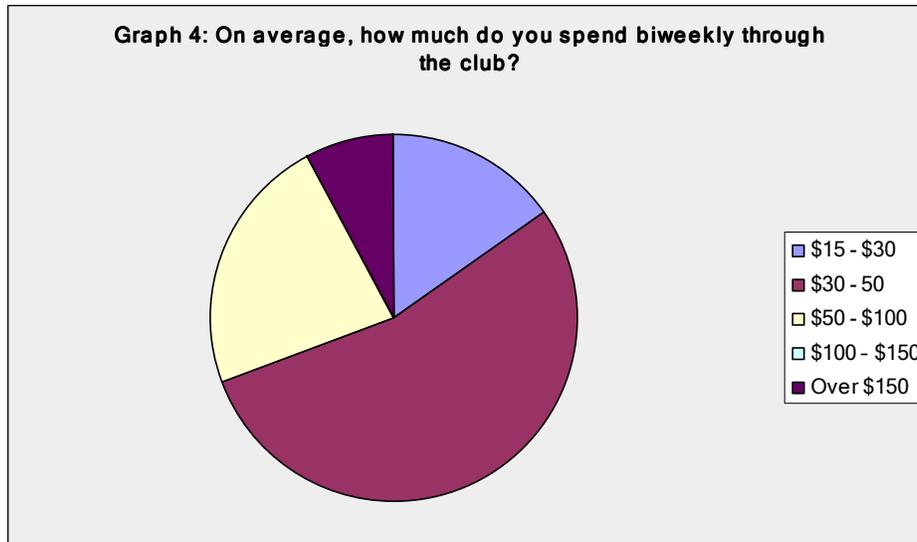
These challenges are being met as the club moves from pilot phase to full sustainability.

Financial Stability

The Department developed a financial analysis tool which any buying club could use to estimate its income and expenses (see attachment)¹². This tool was tested on the DownEast buying clubs and tweaked to be able to do financial “what-ifs” based on variables for sales, overhead expenses and other operating expenses. Using that tool, the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club determined that, in order to be successful, they needed to establish the financial goals and parameters. Those can be found in the draft Operations Manual¹³ attached to this report.

The Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club coordinator worked with a group of members to evaluate their costs and returns. Three factors were necessary for financial success 1) a high number of members buying in any one order period, and 2) the dollar amount of sales per member must be enough to help cover costs, and 3) Some sort of fee to cover overhead costs for breakdown and bookkeeping.

For this buying club the average number of members ordering has been 50. The graph below gives an idea of the size of the orders. These amounts were deemed good enough to help offset costs for the club.



Ad-hoc members put together a financial analysis to figure out how to pay for ongoing expenses. They built in a fee structure for members so those families who cannot volunteer time can do so through payment of fees to hire that support.

The relationship with the school system has been a key advantage for the club to minimize overhead costs for a breakdown location and for storage of supplies and equipment. The school also uses the club as an educational opportunity for students who help the club with breakdown and packaging orders for customers. This has been a win-win for the school and the club.

Regarding the long-term financing for the club for capital expenses, the club has established a development committee whose ideas include a combination of user/membership fees, fundraisers, direct donation solicitations for both monies and equipment, and working with a fiscal agent to apply for grant funding.

Governance

For governance, Western Mountains Alliance staff worked with the club coordinator and self selected club members to develop a set of bylaws¹⁴ in which to govern the club. Some of the issues needing to be worked out included:

People to handle various tasks of the club, including

- The breakdown of product when the farmer arrives
- Deposit/Payment Coordinator
- New Member Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Farmer/Producer Product Availability Coordinator

- Product List Coordinator
- Order Coordinator
- Member Coordinator
- New Farmer Coordinator
- School Contact Coordinator
- Education Coordinator

Other Issues include:

- Establishment of an Advisory Committee
- A Volunteer Requirement
- A fee structure for paying overhead
- Willing to be a paid coordinator
- Organizational Structures – Club Identity

Operating the Club for Convenience and Community

As previously mentioned, the location of the club with the school has been a key component for success. The School Board has a policy to engage students in community service. The teachers encourage using agriculture in the classroom and nutrition units to engage students, and assisting the buying club is a perfect outlet for those objectives. Students help with breakdown, and in some cases delivery of product. In the future, the school garden and the business program may engage with the club to further help offset the workload.

Sourcing Local

One of the initial decisions of the buying club members was to NOT source from distributors, but to source locally first. Here is where the Word-of-Mouth marketing concept pays great dividends to the farmers and the community. The buying club members who have sought out those farmers have done so because they know their farmer, know where their food comes from and want to support them for their community and their children. They know the local farmers are looking for their support. In exchange, the farmers show their interest in the community by working the long hours, providing top quality produce, and providing educational opportunities for the children.

This was most poignantly caught in the recent video produced by club member Dean Gyorgy and available to be viewed at the *Farm Fresh For ME* website. www.fffme.comIt says it all.

Where Do We Go From Here

What the study shows us

The ultimate goal of this project was to just see if we could encourage consumers, through Word-of-Mouth methods, to aggregate themselves around supporting local farm product purchases and the farms in their community. We proved that, for the local food movement, it does not take much effort to develop farmer interest and consumer food advocates.

The farmers who participated know that their marketing costs are lower, but distribution costs could be higher depending on volume. A number of farmers had weekly sales hit \$500, so they understand the potential buying clubs have to their businesses. However, they also said they would have to raise prices if they had to subsidize the administrative overhead of the club. These issues of price fairness and sharing of marketing costs are a negotiating point with the buying club. This is being addressed in the formal written agreements with the farmers as the buying clubs negotiate for fair prices.

Consumers who have developed a strong desire to develop buying clubs span multiple age brackets and appear to be well-educated, aware of the food issues surrounding good health and are interested in supporting local farms. They also have the means to buy local products at slightly increased prices, due to the perceived value of local connections to farmers. They also like the ability to interact with a school system. However, when it comes to volunteerism, some would rather pay out cash not to have to spend time on the distribution functions the club must do.

The food buying club movement is developing, not necessarily due to the financial condition of the economy, but consumers also have a strong desire for better food choices and interest in supporting local farmers. The perennial question is whether buying clubs can eventually enable consumers to realize savings on food purchases since, at this point, consumers are willing to pay a premium for local products and farmers have no incentive to lower their prices. Also to be determined is the ability of small farmers to produce at a scale large enough to reduce the average cost per unit of food. The Readfield area in this pilot study can afford the costs, but what about other areas in Maine? Each community is different, and the only way the buying club could feel comfortable negotiating a lower price with farmers is if the club could guarantee consistent sales of a certain amount.

The pilot buying club documented here is made up of about 50 very motivated families and individuals who have developed relationships with 17 local farmers and small value-added food processors. In three months time they have created an online farmers market potential of over \$1,600 dollars per bi-weekly ordering cycle, or \$50 every two weeks per family (See Table 3 below.)

Table 3 Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club - Average bi-weekly sales

1st cycle 14 buyers	Total: Average Amt	\$529.75 \$14.97
2nd cycle 18 buyers	Total: Average Amt	\$846.04 \$24.02
3rd cycle 26 buyers	Total: Average Amt	\$1524.85 \$49.38
4th cycle 41 buyers	Total: Average Amt	\$1940.08 \$47.04
5th cycle 31 buyers	Total: Average Amt	\$1637.16 \$54.97
6th cycle 44 buyers	Total: Average Amt	\$1816.51 \$41.85

Quite impressive.

What is a Potential Future

Currently Maine has a gross agricultural product of \$577 million, and about 8,136 farms. Of that amount approximately \$75 million can be attributed to direct sales to consumers¹⁵. Average farm gross income is \$75,000 but for small farms which have under \$50,000 in gross sales, they range from \$863 to \$36,000 in gross income¹⁶.

Maine has 602 schools which represent 195,000 families and 187,214 school children.

We hope that more school boards see the successes of this project and how a food buying club links to each piece of the education of students and support for the community. Hopefully that would result in more funds and staffing devoted to this effort, generated by the local community interest for these school programs.

The food buying club model program described here will continue just by the nature of the for-profit model of business success for the market established in Readfield. Farmers will have continual access to aggregated consumers in the community, and can build sales depending on family needs.

If 10 more schools had buying clubs and each buying club generated \$1,500 in bi-weekly sales that would be \$390,000 in increased wealth creation to farmers. If 10% of all schools then adopted this approach, \$2.34 million would be generated statewide - a 3% increase in statewide local sales. These numbers are conservative.

The economic impact to the communities is measured in the increased number of successful small farmers and the percentage increase in their family incomes generated by the small farm products produced for this emerging market. If 15 farms are attached to each buying club, that would be an increase of farm family income of \$2,600 yearly or an increase of 5% for a farm family of two adults and two children on a living wage (\$54,641); or a 15% increase in income for a single person on a living wage (\$17,180)¹⁷. Many small farmers fall into those income categories and any increase in income is meaningful to the family.

The economic impact is also measured by the increase in flow of dollars back to the community from increased employment for youth in the communities, and improvement in local food choices and lowered food costs for the families involved.

The food buying clubs will change over the years with the coming and going of families through the school system. Farmers may also come and go, but as long as these businesses stay profitable, as we think they will, they will continue to exist and add economic impact yearly to local families and small, local farms at the town level.

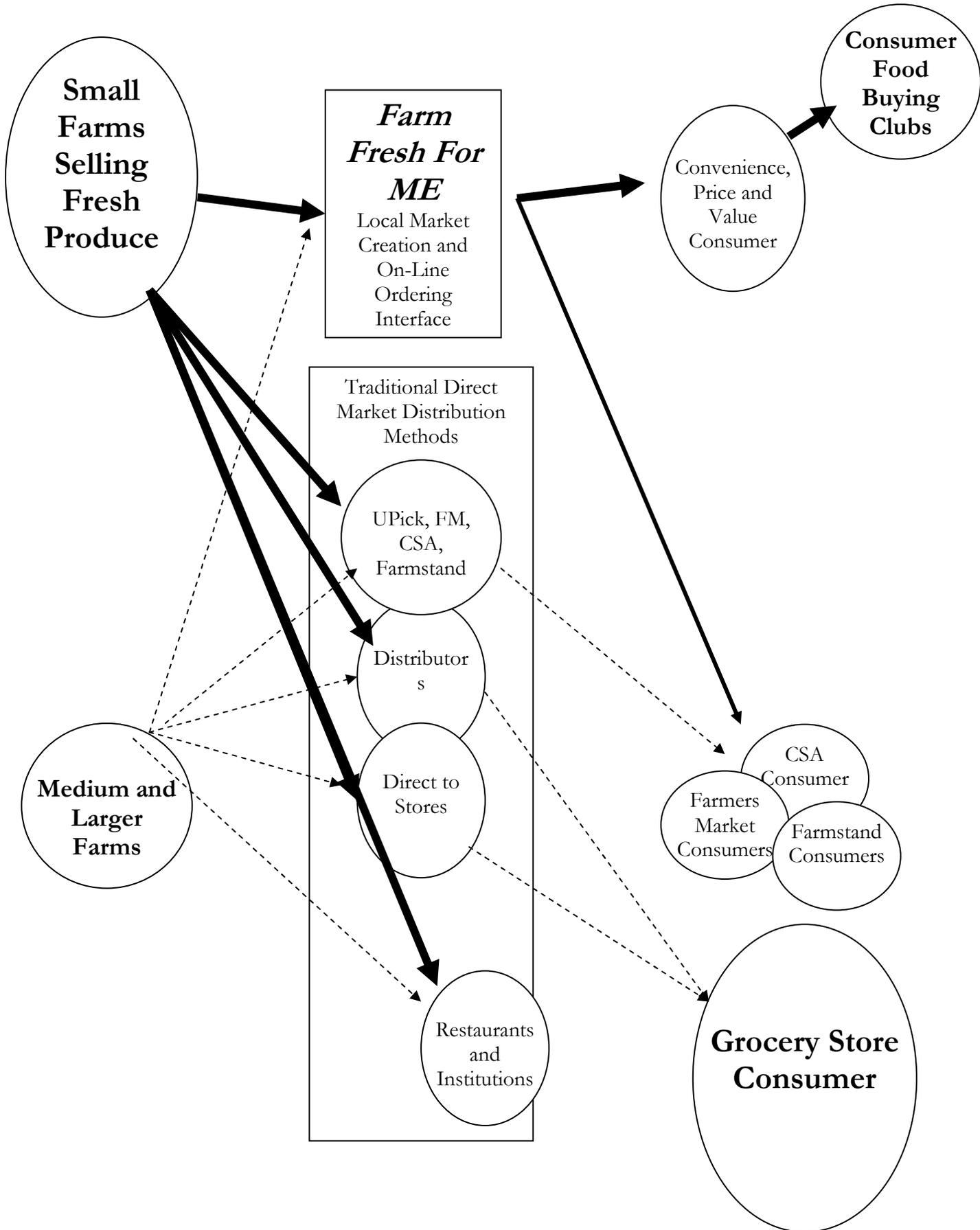
Government's role is to educate and assist development of private enterprise. Nothing could be better than to see more effort created in the schools to educate and engage our children about where their food comes from and to respect the farmers who provide for us. Sustainability of communities depends on it.

For Further Information

The Maine Department of Agriculture and Western Mountains Alliance has set up a website with information on how to set up a consumer buying club, with resources for farmers and consumers on what methods work well to make the connections and promote business for buying local food. Most of the information generated with this project can be found on www.fffme.com.

The Word-of-Mouth Marketing Conference and the Maine Harvest Festival Conference videos share a wealth of information and are available on DVD from the Maine Department of Agriculture, c/o Division of Agricultural Resource Development, 28 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333 207-287-3491. email: info@getrealmaine.com.

Appendix 1: Food Cluster Map





Your online source for fresh local food from Maine



- HOME
- FAQ'S
- FIND A BUYING CLUB
- START A BUYING CLUB
- RESOURCES

Farm Fresh for ME is a newly established initiative of the [Maine Department of Agriculture](#) in collaboration with [Western Mountains Alliance](#) and other for-profit and NGO's who are supporting development of food buying clubs throughout Maine. The ultimate goal of Farm Fresh for ME is to increase the market for small family farms in their local communities while providing nutritious, healthy and affordable foods to Maine families.

Farm Fresh for ME embraces the concept of consumer food buying clubs. A consumer food buying club pools the demand of several households, allowing them to purchase larger quantities of food at less than full retail price. Local food buying clubs are a wonderful way to help Maine farmers sell more products in a more organized, collective way.

This fall, funding from [USDA](#) and the Maine Department of Agriculture will help **Farm Fresh for ME** pilot an innovative buying club model in [Breadfield](#) where [Maranacook Area School's](#) support will enable student involvement in the project and a distribution site at [Maranacook Middle School](#). Farm Fresh for ME is also seeking to support the development of additional buying clubs. For more information contact Trida Cook at tcook@westernmountainsalliance.org.



Maranacook Buying Club



1

Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club

This is a pilot club relaunching at the beginning of September. To learn more, see the club's [pudelines](#), visit its [website](#) or jump right in and [join the club!](#)

FAQ's



2

3

4

5

Connecting local Farmers and consumers one click at a time

End Notes

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- ⁶ Franklin, Greg and Carol Kline. Gregory S. Franklin Associates, LLC. July 28, 1997. Connecticut
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- ⁷ Stephenson, Garry and Larry Lev. 1998. Common Support for Local Agriculture in Two
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- ⁹ **Maranacook Market Research Report**
- ¹⁰ Maranacook Online Buying Club 2011 Consumer Survey.
- ¹¹ Maranacook Online Buying Club 2011 Farmer Survey
- ¹² Buying Club Financial Analysis Tool.
- ¹³ Buying Club Operations Manual Sample Draft
- ¹⁴ Buying Club Operations Manual Sample Draft
- ¹⁵ Agricultural Creative Economy Study, Maine Department of Agriculture, 2007.
- ¹⁶ USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE
- ¹⁷ Living Wage Calculator, Maine <http://www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu/states/23>

Maranacook Online Buying Club 2011 Farmer Survey

Conducted by Western Mountains Alliance

January 2012

Twelve of the thirteen surveys we sent to participating farmers were returned. We found that 41.7% of these farmers are between the ages of 25-34.

The club operated on a two week buying cycle. The majority of the farmers (58.3%) had sales between \$100-\$200 or each cycle.

When asked where else the farmers sold their products, 100% replied they also sold at farmers' markets or farm stands. Community Supported Agriculture was another popular venue with 66% of farmers conducting CSAs. Other markets included grocery stores and small specialty stores where 41.7% of the farmers were selling and 25% were selling to other online markets or buying clubs.

Direct outreach by the club coordinators via email and phone calls attracted 58.3% of the farmers who sold to the club. Another 25% of the farmers joined because of word of mouth through family or friends.

The number one reason farmers (91.7%) decided to supply the club was to gain access to new customers. Convenience was the second most popular reason farmers joined the club with 41.7% of farmers citing easy delivery.

83% of the farmers have a website for their business. All farmers were asked how comfortable they are using technology. 33.3% reported they were very comfortable and 66.7% reported being somewhat comfortable. No one reported being uncomfortable using technology.

Every farmer expressed satisfaction with how the buying club operated. Only one of the farmers mentioned that he would like a longer lead time between notification of sales and delivery. He would like at least a week. Currently the time period between notification and delivery is three days.

Selling to the club was deemed to be very easy by 60% of the farmers. The remaining 40% said that it was somewhat easy to sell to the club. No one reported any difficulties.

100% of the farmers stated they connected with new customers as a result of selling to the club.

When asked if they would be willing to support the administration of the club with a monthly fee, much like a table fee at a brick and mortar farmers market, 90.9% said they would. When asked how much they would be willing to contribute each month, 88.7% said they would be willing to contribute between \$4 and \$6. At least one farmer reported that s/he would be willing to pay \$10 a month. Still another stated the amount s/he was willing to pay depended on whether it included being able to buy from other farmers via the club.

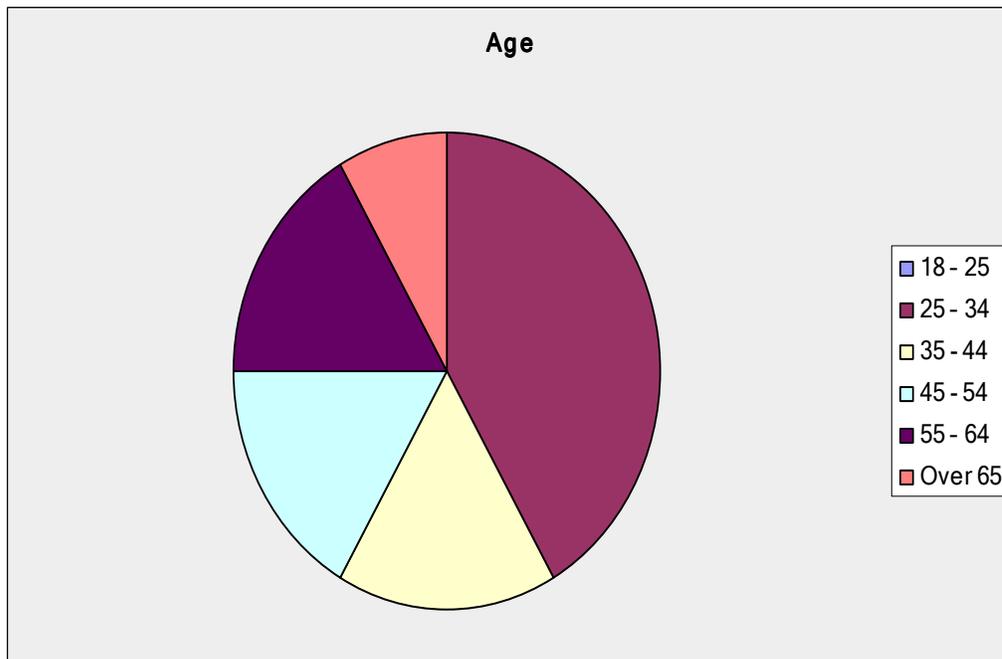
Finally, we asked for general comments/suggestions for the club. Below is what we heard

“You guys are doing a great job. We have similar stuff going on down here. It would be great to get together sometime and share experiences. Good luck. Thanks for all your hard work. Wish we were a bit closer!” – Tide Mill Farm

“I had a good talk with Jeff Bridges, Food Service Manager for Maranacook and shared my interest in involving the kids more in the Coop and us farmers more in education around nutrition and school gardens, He encouraged me to do this and gave me a staff member to coordinate the teaching as a volunteer. On another subject, use of the school kitchen for farmers to rent to process large volumes of produce into value added products, he was very open to making this happen. I look forward to involving Maranacook students more in nutrition ed and MLFBC activities.” - Nancy Chandler

“I believe the success of the club is because local farmers are vendors. I also don't believe for the most part they can sell at wholesale prices. The focus should remain knowing your farmer, small scale production and quality products. I believe the farmer should pay no less than at any other market in order to sell their products.” – Anonymous

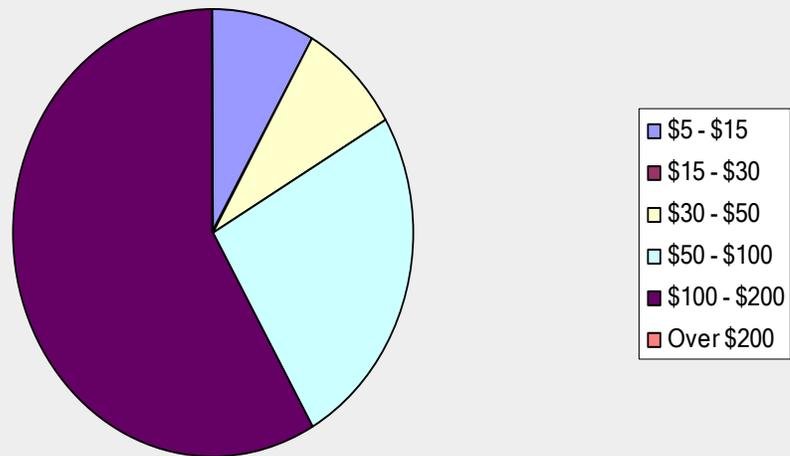
Age		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18 - 25	0.0%	0
25 - 34	41.7%	5
35 - 44	16.7%	2
45 - 54	16.7%	2
55 - 64	16.7%	2
Over 65	8.3%	1
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		0



On average, how much do you sell biweekly through the club?

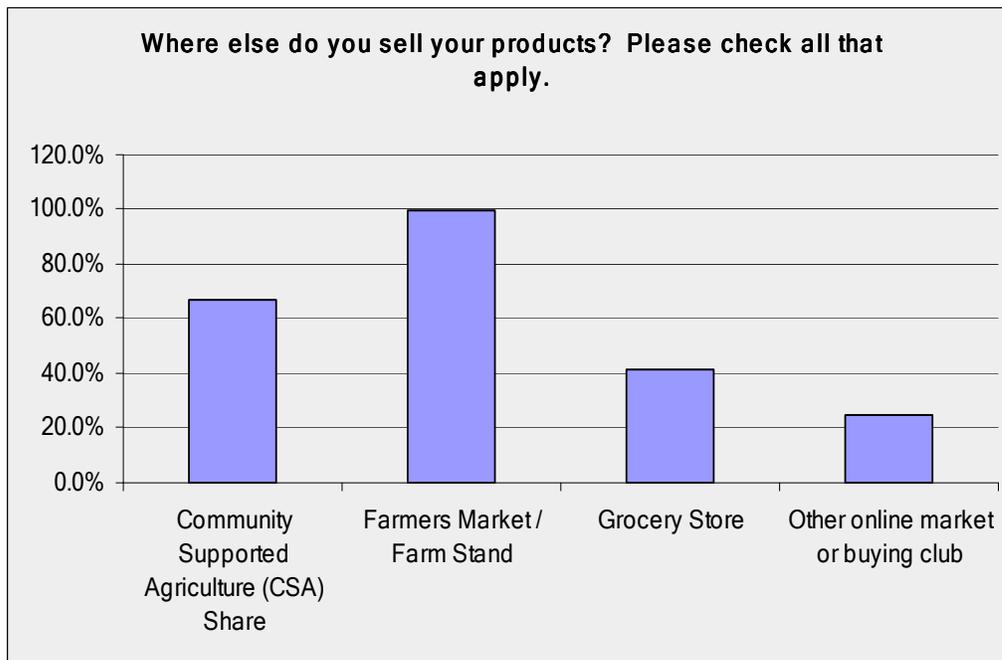
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
\$5 - \$15	8.3%	1
\$15 - \$30	0.0%	0
\$30 - \$50	8.3%	1
\$50 - \$100	25.0%	3
\$100 - \$200	58.3%	7
Over \$200	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Graph 3: On average, how much do you sell biweekly through the club?



Where else do you sell your products? Please check all that apply.

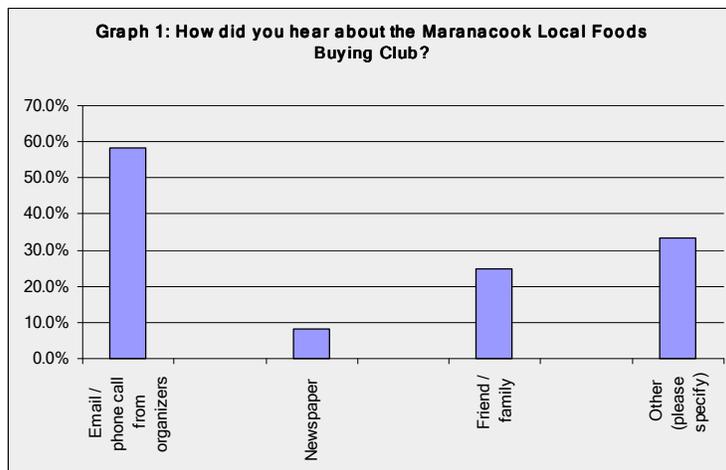
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Share	66.7%	8
Farmers Market / Farm Stand	100.0%	12
Grocery Store	41.7%	5
Other online market or buying club	25.0%	3
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		0



How did you hear about the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club? Please check all that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Email / phone call from organizers	58.3%	7
School Flyer	0.0%	0
Newspaper	8.3%	1
Facebook	0.0%	0
Friend / family	25.0%	3
School Event	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	33.3%	4
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)	Categories
1	Feb 14, 2012 4:34 PM	Customer	
2	Feb 14, 2012 2:55 PM	Hi -re question 3 other buyers are Marie's Whole Foods in Readfield, the Belfast Coop and several outlets in Portland. Also some Wine shops and sometimes Lakeside apple orchard. It all depends upon how much I have available at any given time. Thank you.	
3	Feb 9, 2012 4:19 PM	Walter Beasley's daughter called me to ask me to participate as a vendor to the MLFBC, or to support it with information.	
4	Feb 9, 2012 4:05 PM	Wayne Farmers Market	

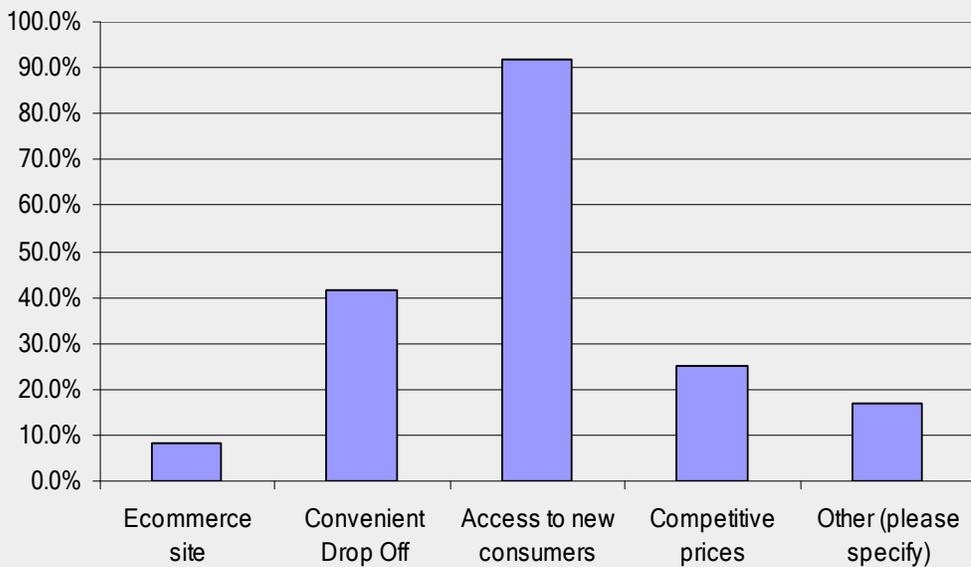


Please select the top two reasons you're selling through the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club:

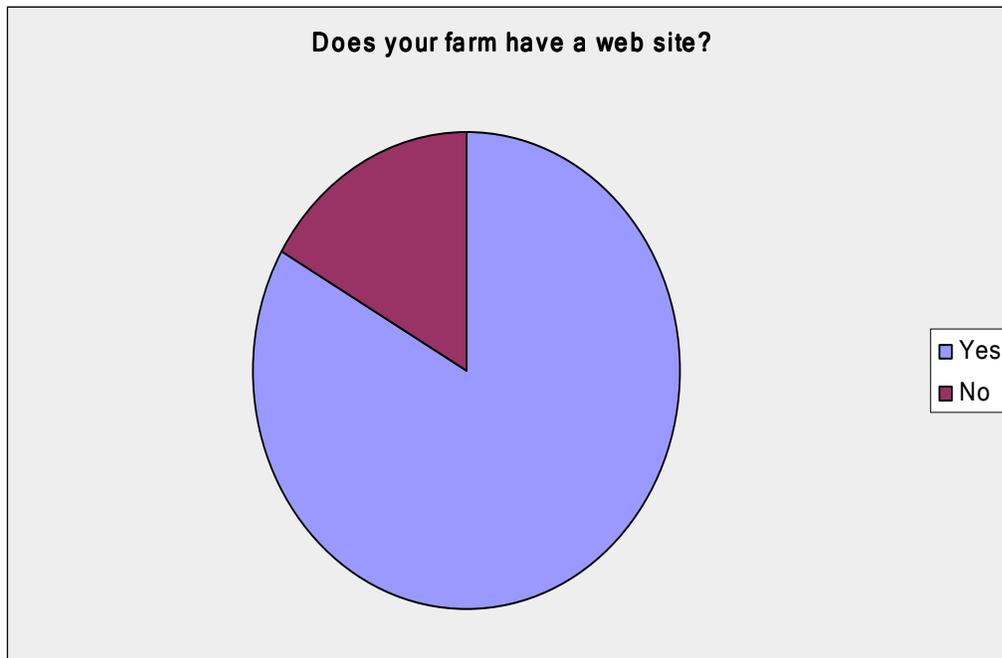
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Ecommerce site	8.3%	1
Convenient Drop Off	41.7%	5
Access to new consumers	91.7%	11
Competitive prices	25.0%	3
Other (please specify)	16.7%	2
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)	Categories
1	Feb 29, 2012 3:14 PM	At the request of customers	
2	Feb 14, 2012 4:34 PM	Pre-ordered sales	

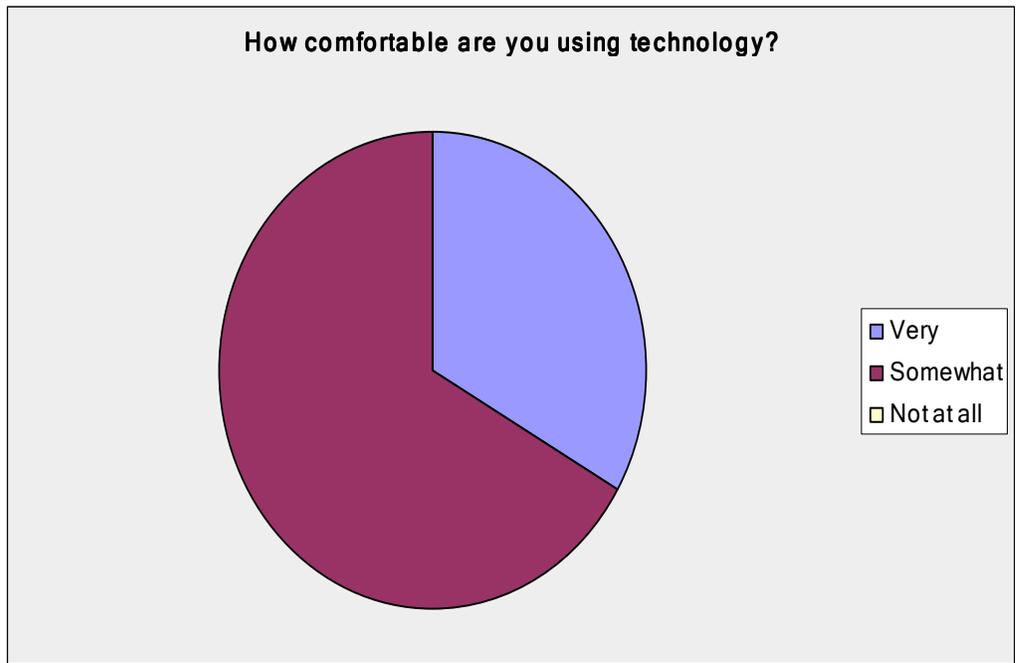
Graph 2: Please select the top two reasons you're selling through the Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club:



Does your farm have a web site?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	83.3%	10
No	16.7%	2
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		0



How comfortable are you using technology?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very	33.3%	4
Somewhat	66.7%	8
Not at all	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		12
<i>skipped question</i>		0



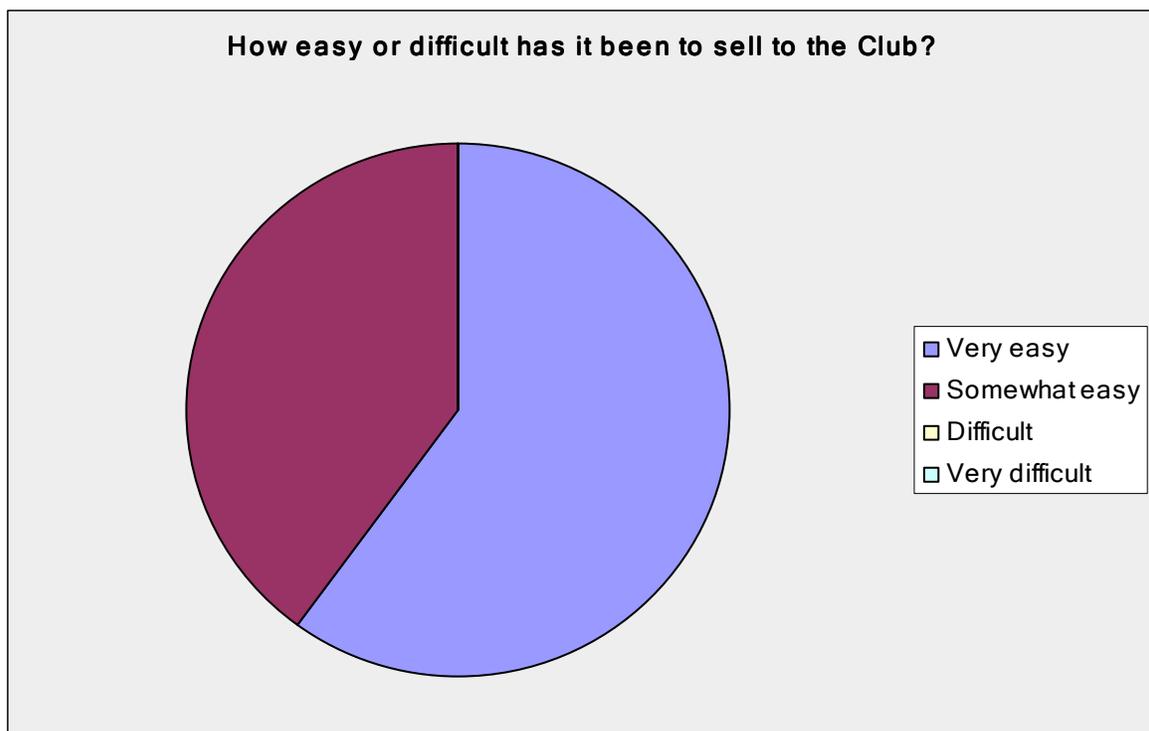
Are you satisfied with how the distribution site at Maranacook Middle School is operating?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	10
No	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		3
<i>answered question</i>		10
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)	Categories
1	Feb 29, 2012 3:14 PM	Seems good. I haven't seen it. It's great we can drop off at hours "outside" the 9-5. That makes it able for us to participate. Hoping for bigger orders-would love to see \$300-\$500 in orders.	
2	Feb 9, 2012 4:19 PM	I would like to see customers able to continue ordering online using the buying club software + pay for this convenient tool through monthly fees. The alternative method of each vendor making group mailings each order cycle to the membership then buyers emailing me individually and me assembling each order would only work from Nov - Apr. I am too busy in the summer to take on extra tasks.	
3	Feb 9, 2012 3:59 PM	Mostly - Would prefer more time between when orders are placed with us and when they get dropped off. Gardiner has a full week in between.	



How easy or difficult has it been to sell to the Club?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very easy	60.0%	6
Somewhat easy	40.0%	4
Difficult	0.0%	0
Very difficult	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		3
<i>answered question</i>		10
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)	Categories
1	Feb 14, 2012 2:55 PM	Am new so don't know.	
2	Feb 10, 2012 8:32 PM	I am very new to the club, so will be able to determine this better as things get rolling again! I have acquired a couple of new customers, however!	
3	Feb 9, 2012 4:19 PM	Gina has made the process very smooth for vendors. 19 miles is a long way to deliver orders. I am making it more affordable by carpooling with a neighbor farm and using an electronic car for deliveries when possible.	



Have you connected with new customers as a result of selling through to the Club?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	11
No	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		11
<i>skipped question</i>		1

What is the maximum you would be willing to pay each month to support administration of the club?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
\$2	11.1%	1
\$4	55.6%	5
\$6	33.3%	3
Other (please specify)		4
<i>answered question</i>		9
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)	Categories
1	Feb 29, 2012 3:14 PM		5
2	Feb 14, 2012 4:34 PM		10
3	Feb 9, 2012 4:19 PM	If it included the ability for me to order from other vendors also.	
4	Feb 9, 2012 4:05 PM	\$25 a month for 6 months Oct- March, Apr - Sept	

Maranacook Online Buying Club 2011 Consumer Survey

Conducted by Western Mountains Alliance
November, 2011

Summary

This survey was handed out on a pick-up day and the emailed to the club as a whole. At that time the club had 125 members. We received 14 responses.

The ages of the respondents were a mix:

28.4% between ages of 35-44;

14.3% between ages 45-54;

35.7% between ages 55-64; and

21.4% age of 65 or older

We asked how many adults were in the household. 57.1% answered there were two adults in the household and 28.6% answered there was only one adult in the household. Interestingly, 14.3% answered that there were 3 adults in the household.

When asked how many children were in household, 37.5% answered only one; 25% answered two, 12.5% answered three and another 25% answered four.

At the time the survey was administered, the club had been in operation for five buying cycles. Most of the respondents (35.7%) stated they bought from the club twice. 28.6% used the club only once and 21.4% bought from the club three times.

Sales at this early stage saw 53.8% of respondents spending between \$30 - \$50 and 23.1% spending between \$50 - \$100.

We wanted to know where else club members bought food. Respondents could choose more than one answer. The grocery store topped the list with 92.9%. The runner up was farmers markets with 71%. Directly from farmers came in with 35.7% and CSA's were utilized by 21.4%.

After newspaper coverage at 65.1%, hearing from family and friends (30.8%) was the most popular way of finding out about the club.

We asked what were the top two reasons club members joined the club. The top answer was access to locally produced foods (78.6%). The second reason was to support area farmers (64.3%).

Only one respondent skipped the question asking what else they purchased online, leading us to conclude that at least 92.8% of respondents use the Internet to purchase goods.

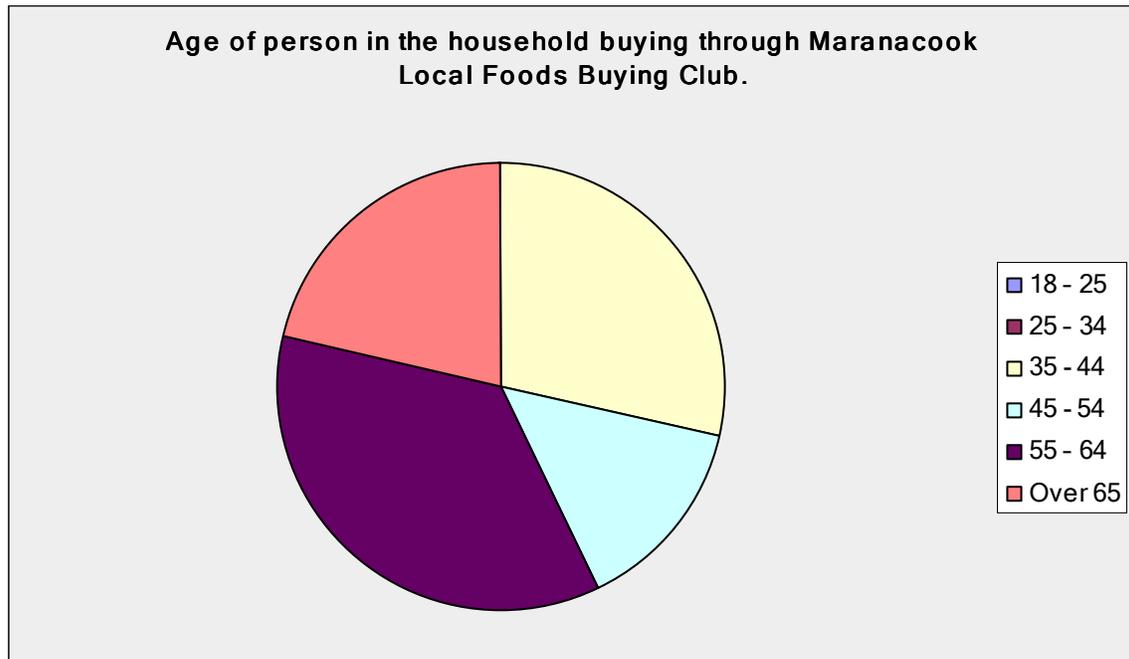
57.1% told us it was very easy using the buying club software with 42.9% saying it was moderately easy. 100% told us they were happy using the Maranacook Middle School as a distribution site.

We asked whether folks would have sought out the products being offered if not for the buying club. 42.9% said they would have sought out the products elsewhere and 57.1% said they would not. Of those answering they would have sought out the products elsewhere, 83.3% based their answer on proximity of the farm. 33.3% based their answer on being familiar with the farmer selling the product.

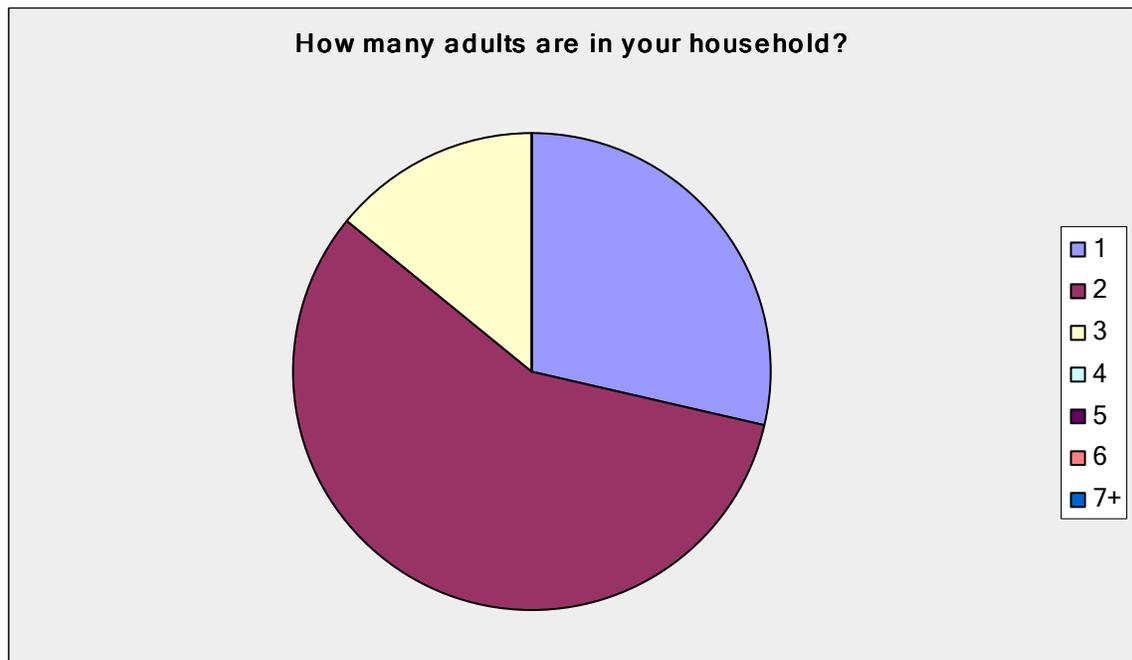
While answer to whether members would be willing to support the administration of club with a monthly fee varied, all agreed they would pay something. The majority, 46.2%, said they would pay \$4 a month, 23.1% said \$2 a month, and 23.1% said \$10 a month.

When asked if they would be willing to volunteer up to 12 hours a year, 61.5% said they would and 23.1% said they would not.

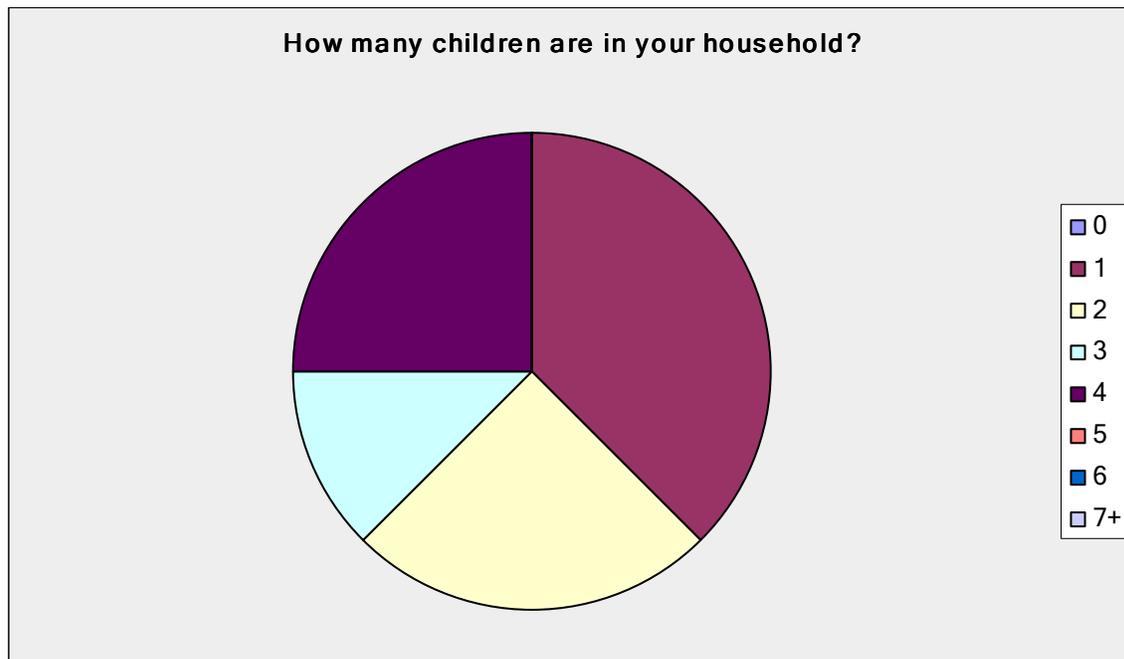
Age of person in the household buying through Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18 - 25	0.0%	0
25 - 34	0.0%	0
35 - 44	28.6%	4
45 - 54	14.3%	2
55 - 64	35.7%	5
Over 65	21.4%	3
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		0



How many adults are in your household?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	28.6%	4
2	57.1%	8
3	14.3%	2
4	0.0%	0
5	0.0%	0
6	0.0%	0
7+	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		0



How many children are in your household?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0	0.0%	0
1	37.5%	3
2	25.0%	2
3	12.5%	1
4	25.0%	2
5	0.0%	0
6	0.0%	0
7+	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		8
<i>skipped question</i>		6



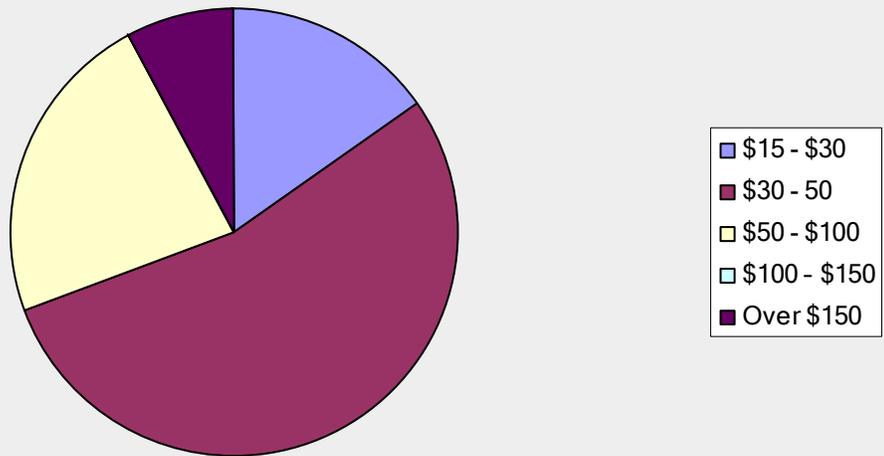
How many times have you purchased products through the Maranacook Online Buying Club?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	28.6%	4
2	35.7%	5
3	21.4%	3
4	0.0%	0
5	7.1%	1
6	0.0%	0
7	0.0%	0
8	0.0%	0
9	0.0%	0
10	0.0%	0
11	0.0%	0
12	0.0%	0
13	0.0%	0
14	0.0%	0
15	0.0%	0
16	0.0%	0
17	0.0%	0
18	0.0%	0
19	0.0%	0
20	0.0%	0
more than 20	0.0%	0
more than 30	7.1%	1
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		0

On average, how much do you spend biweekly through the club?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
\$15 - \$30	15.4%	2
\$30 - 50	53.8%	7
\$50 - \$100	23.1%	3
\$100 - \$150	0.0%	0
Over \$150	7.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Graph 4: On average, how much do you spend biweekly through the club?

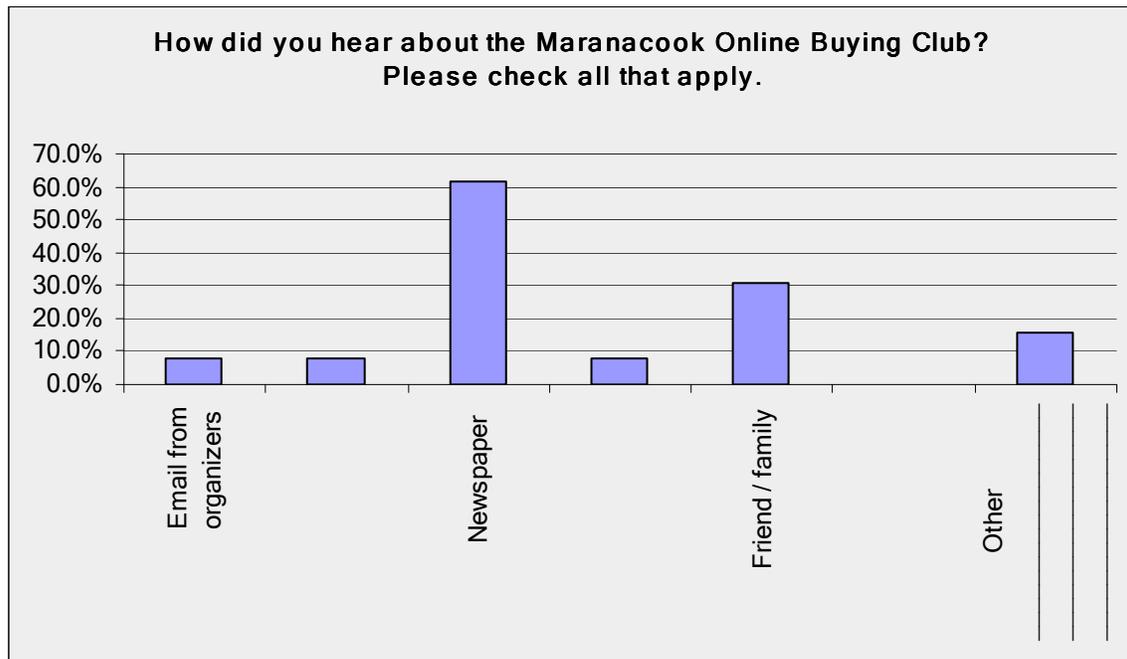


Where else do you purchase local foods? Please check all that apply		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Share	21.4%	3
Farmers Market / Farm Stand	71.4%	10
Grocery Store	92.9%	13
Directly from the farm	35.7%	5
Other online market or buying club	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		0



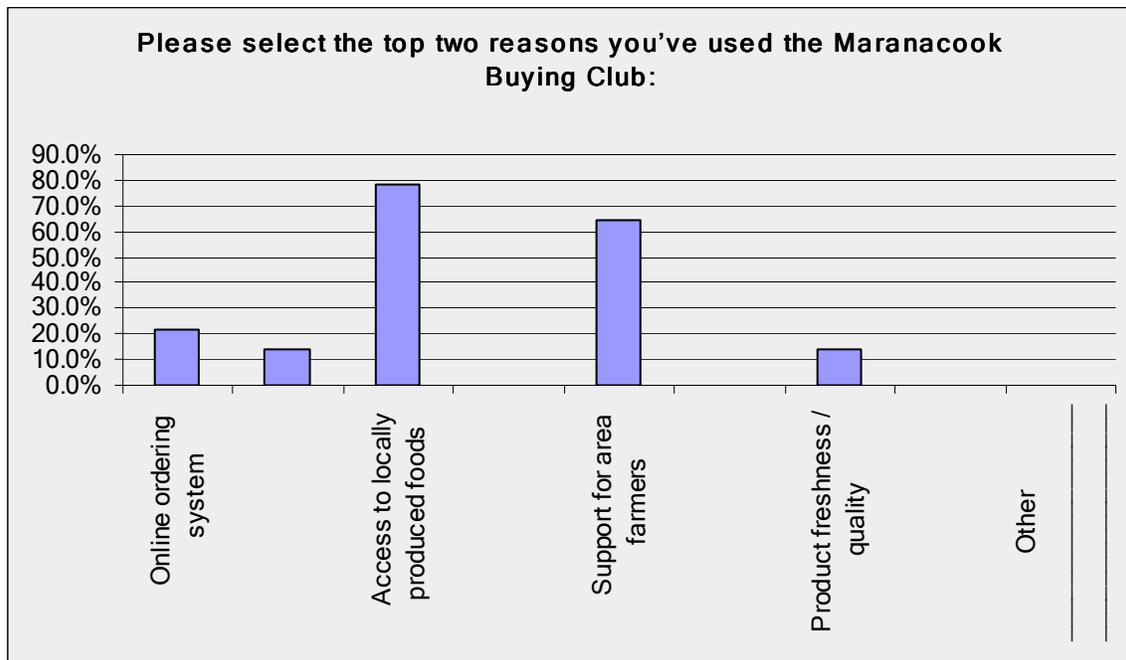
How did you hear about the Maranacook Online Buying Club? Please check all that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Email from organizers	7.7%	1
School Flyer	7.7%	1
Newspaper	61.5%	8
Facebook	7.7%	1
Friend / family	30.8%	4
School Event	0.0%	0
Other	15.4%	2
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		1

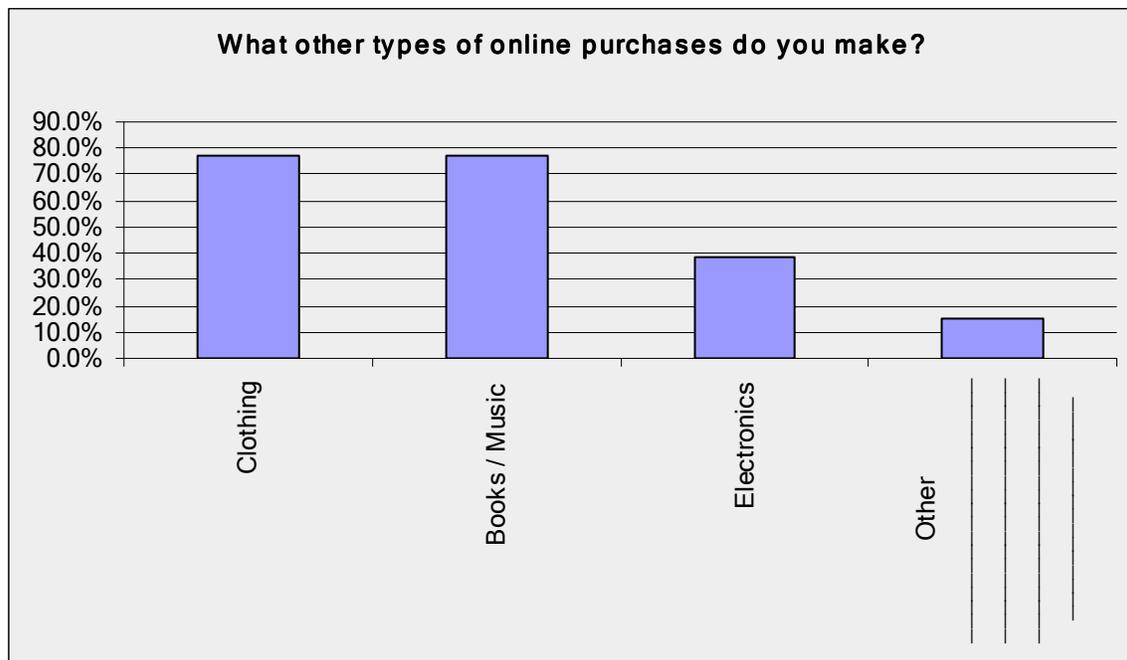


Please select the top two reasons you've used the Maranacook Buying Club:

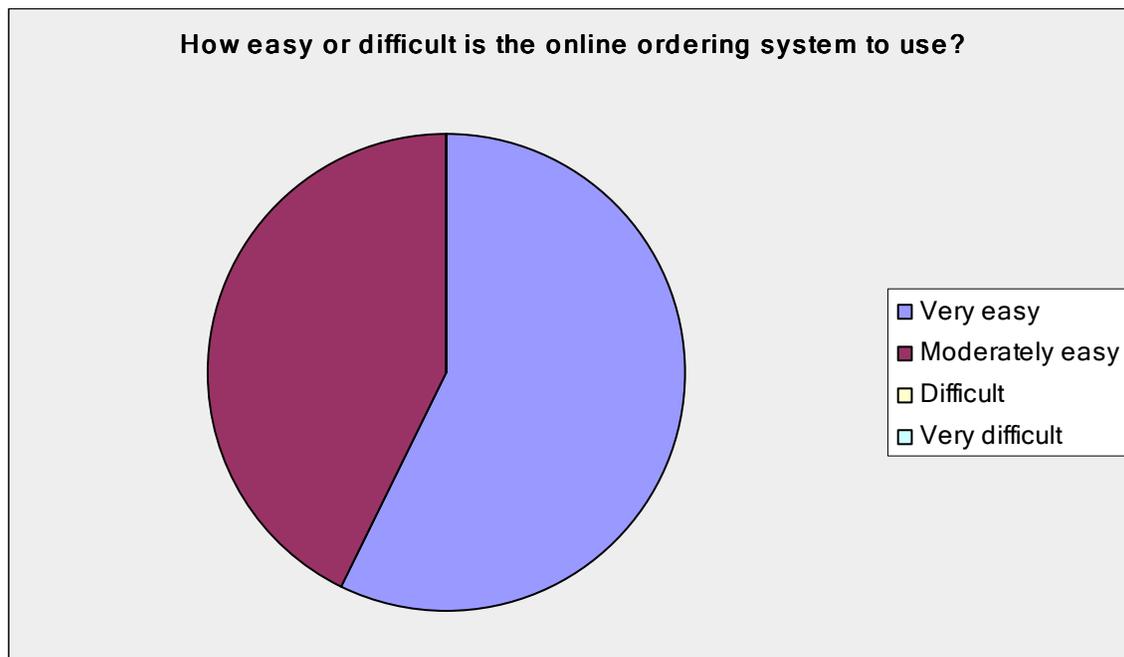
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Online ordering system	21.4%	3
Convenient Pick Up	14.3%	2
Access to locally produced foods	78.6%	11
Farmers are known to you	0.0%	0
Support for area farmers	64.3%	9
Competitive prices	0.0%	0
Product freshness / quality	14.3%	2
Produce Selection	0.0%	0
Other	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		0



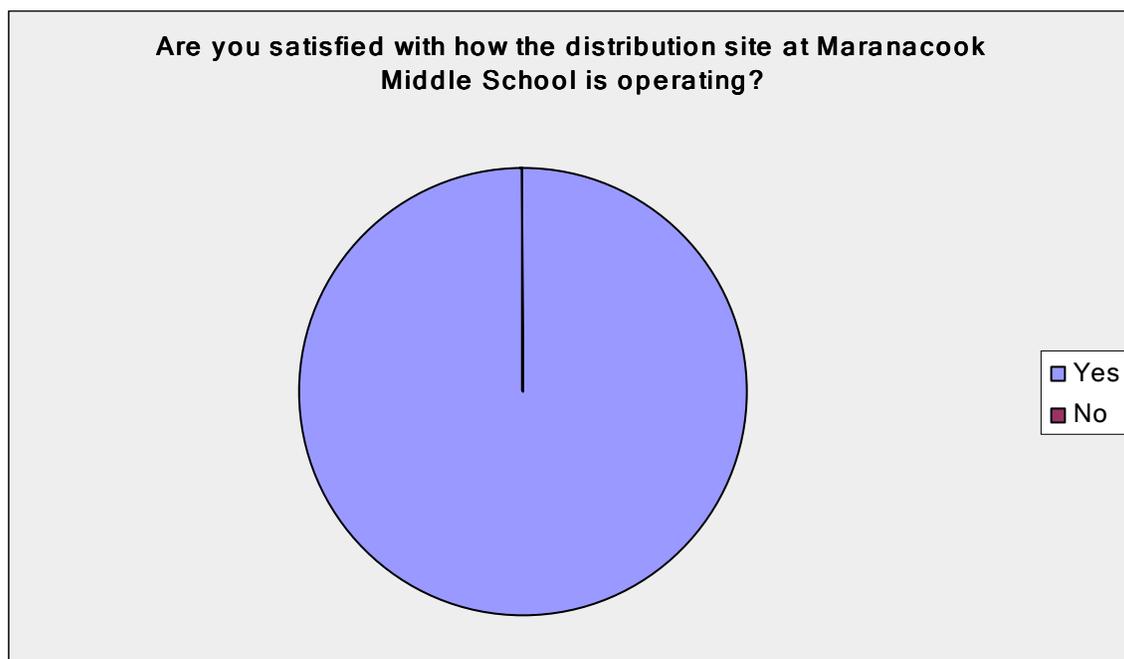
What other types of online purchases do you make?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Clothing	76.9%	10
Books / Music	76.9%	10
Electronics	38.5%	5
Other	15.4%	2
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		1



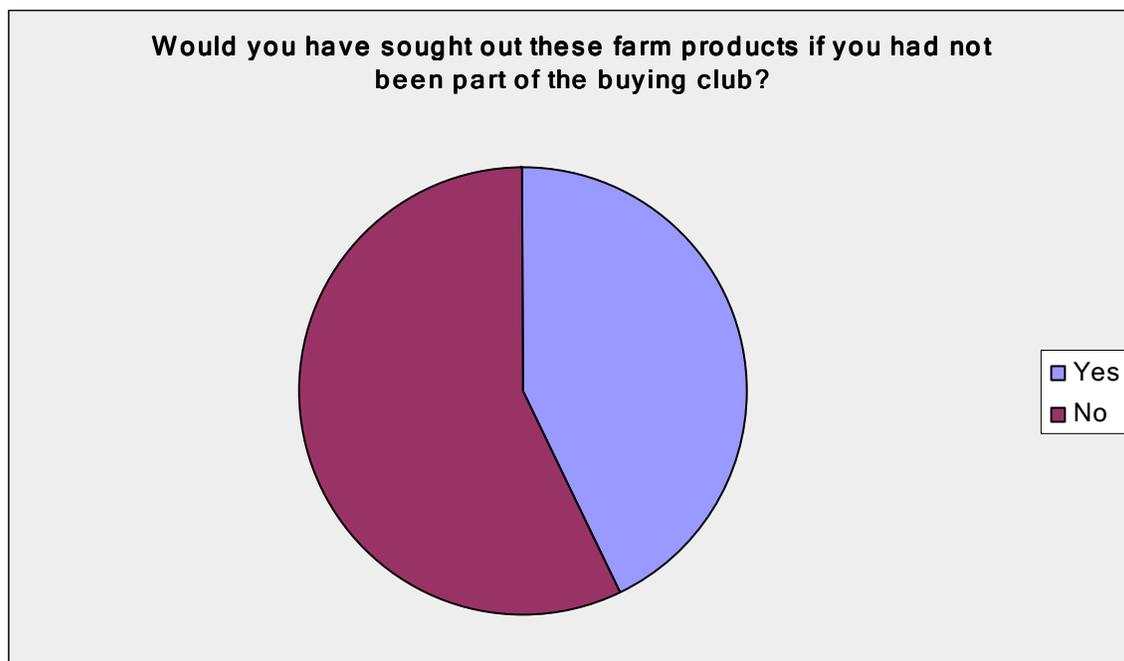
How easy or difficult is the online ordering system to use?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Very easy	57.1%	8
Moderately easy	42.9%	6
Difficult	0.0%	0
Very difficult	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		0



Are you satisfied with how the distribution site at Maranacook Middle School is operating?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	14
No	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		0

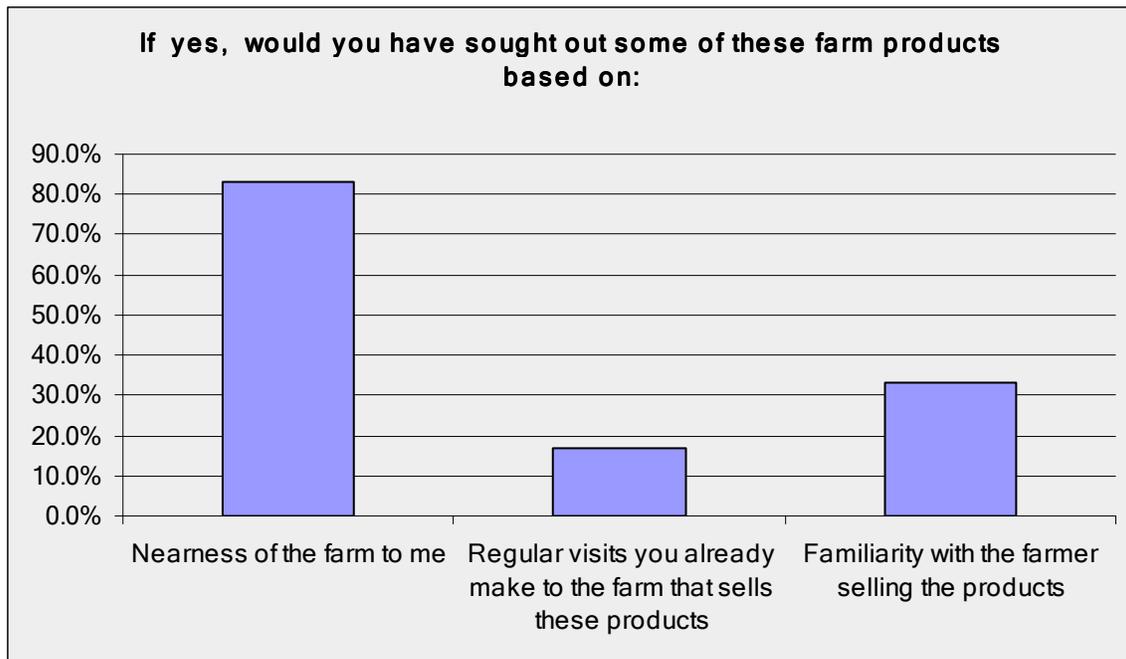


Would you have sought out these farm products if you had not been part of the buying club?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	42.9%	6
No	57.1%	8
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		0



If yes, would you have sought out some of these farm products based on:

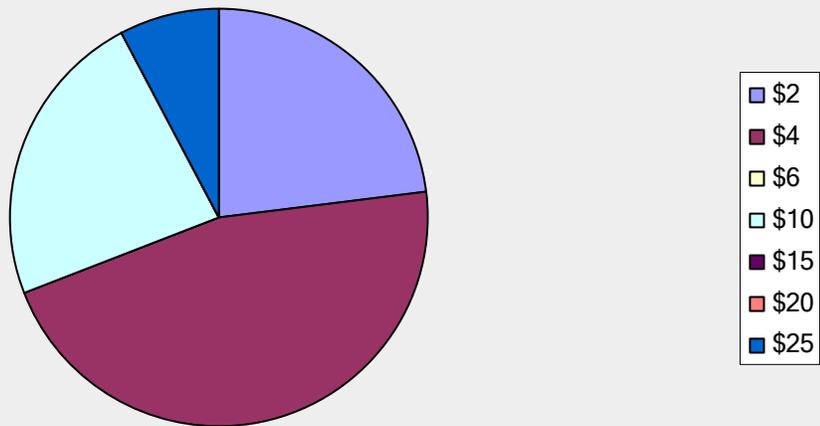
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Nearness of the farm to me	83.3%	5
Regular visits you already make to the farm that sells these products	16.7%	1
Familiarity with the farmer selling the products	33.3%	2
<i>answered question</i>		6
<i>skipped question</i>		8



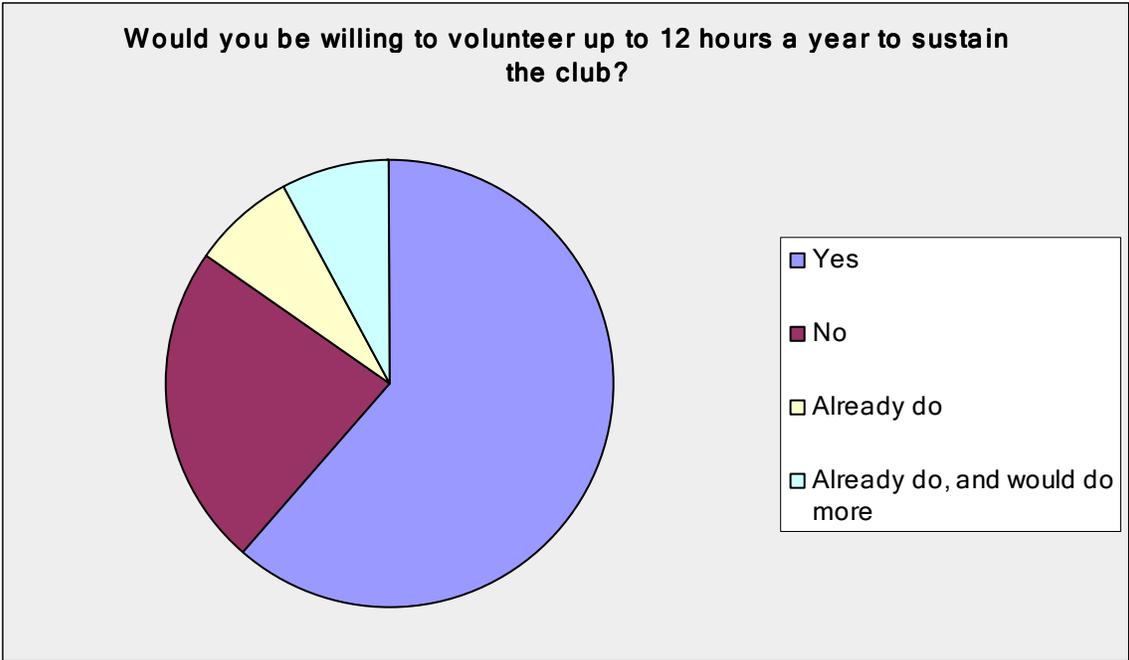
Administration of the Maranacook Online Buying Club is currently subsidized by grant funding through the end of the 2011. Organizers will be exploring other ways to sustain the club after this period. The software costs \$1 per member per month and other associated administrative costs. What is the maximum you would be willing to pay each month to support administration of the club?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
\$2	23.1%	3
\$4	46.2%	6
\$6	0.0%	0
\$10	23.1%	3
\$15	0.0%	0
\$20	0.0%	0
\$25	7.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Administration of the Maranacook Online Buying Club is currently subsidized by grant funding through the end of the 2011.
Organize



Would you be willing to volunteer up to 12 hours a year to sustain the club?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	61.5%	8
No	23.1%	3
Already do	7.7%	1
Already do, and would do more	7.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>		13
<i>skipped question</i>		1



Please share suggestions for how we can improve the online ordering system, distribution site or other components of the buying club.

Answer Options	Response Count
	4
<i>answered question</i>	4
<i>skipped question</i>	10

Number	Response Date	Response Text	Categories
1	Nov 29, 2011 3:29 PM		
2	Nov 29, 2011 3:25 PM		
3	Nov 29, 2011 3:17 PM		
4	Nov 29, 2011 3:15 PM		

Would prefer not to, but would in order to keep the organization alive

Live out of state, so couldn't volunteer

Today was my first time. Some people suggested obtaining other organic foods (raisins, etc.)

This is a great idea. I don't have time to volunteer but I would pay a bit more.

Market Research Report

Involvement of Maine Schools in Food Buying Clubs

Lauren Fish
Independent Consultant to the
Maine Department of Agriculture and Heart of Maine R C & D
June 22, 2009

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Executive Summary

This report details the research conducted on food buying clubs in the Maranacook school community. Nine interviews were conducted and a report was compiled to explain the information gathered. The main research finding is that a food buying club can be a partner with the local high school by establishing a community-run club with the involvement of a few dedicated students and school clubs as community service. The school can also be a way to advertise the buying club to the local community, as well as a central place for distribution and club meetings. The next steps for the Maranacook school community are to find a couple dedicated, enthusiastic people to head up the club and start getting the word out to find new members; this will start things on the way to an efficient, and enjoyable buying club.

Introduction

Food buying clubs are being or have been established in many locations around Maine. They are receiving positive consumer interest and proving beneficial to farmers and the community in many ways. This is an idea that is starting to flourish throughout Maine, but there are a lot of possibilities that have not been thought of or researched.

The Department of Agriculture contracted to have research conducted on food buying clubs and, in particular, the possibility of student involvement in these clubs. To carry out this research many articles and websites were reviewed detailing the inner workings of food buying clubs including the benefits, difficulties, and necessities. Interviews were conducted with eight community members, including the superintendent, principal, teachers, and students of Maranacook Community School in Readfield, Maine. Through these interviews feedback was solicited on the idea of having a food buying club in this community and how students can be involved in the project.

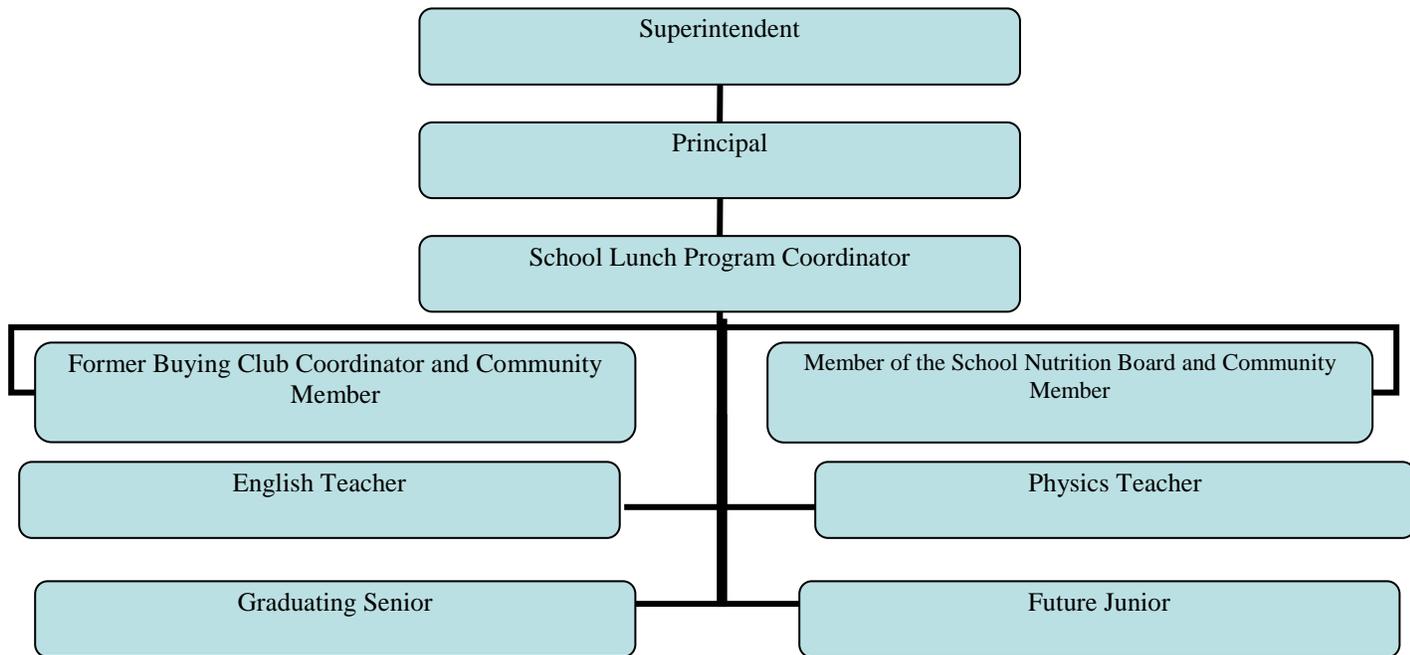
A food buying club is traditionally a group of community members who come together because they are interested in providing local produce to the surrounding area. They locate and involve local farmers who go online to list their current produce on a regular basis. Community members can then go online and purchase the produce they want at any time from the products available. The products are sold in bulk by the farmer at slightly higher than wholesale prices and then a small distribution and handling percentage is tacked on for the buying club. This makes the food a little more expensive than wholesale, but still cheaper than buying it in the grocery store. The buying club coordinates and facilitates a convenient location so that farmers can drop off their goods and consumers can pick them up quickly and efficiently. The club makes purchasing local food cheaper and more convenient in order to provide fresher and safer food, to stimulate the local economy, and to lessen their carbon footprint.

Interviewees were introduced the idea of having a student-run food buying club. This idea consisted of the buying club as an extracurricular activity run solely by a group of interested students and a head faculty member. Through these discussions and interviews a model concept was developed that would better suit the school and community around it. This model consists of key community members that get the buying club up and running with a few dedicated students that are full-time members. Other students get involved as acts of community service and the school becomes a mode of communication and also a positive place for a distribution site. Through this model a cohesive and successful buying club can be established that reaps many benefits for the consumers, the farmers, the students, and the community.

Research Findings

Interview Map

This interview map details the names and positions of the nine people that I interviewed to collect the data for my market research. Appendix A details the feedback given by each interviewee. The overall feedback that I got about the idea of implementing a buying club in our community with the help of the school was very positive. People were excited to hear about what a buying club was and the logistics of how it could be introduced into a community like ours. They had lots of ideas and input about the best ways to make a club like this a reality in our community. The major findings of my interviews were the tendency to lean towards the community with student involvement model, the positive feedback about the school being the distribution site, and the opinion that we would be able to find interested community members and students to run this club.



Starting a Club:

There are three basic buying club models that I have researched and debated during my interviews. The model that I started with was an extracurricular model where the buying club is run by a group of high school students and one faculty advisor. The reason I started with this model is because I wanted to see if we could install buying clubs into high schools around Maine where members would cycle through as students went through high school. The benefits for the student participants would be vast, including learning about the business of farming and how to

run a small business. Although there were many benefits to this model, through my interviews I determined that it would be hard to find the commitment needed from overcommitted students and teachers. The harvesting season also proves difficult because during the summer students are not in school and this is peak time for produce being sold by the buying club. This is why I started to broaden my ideas for possible models and turned to a student-run buying club with the assistance of a few key community members.

I spoke with interviewees about the possibility of having the buying club be an extracurricular activity with a group of interested students, a faculty member, and the assistance of two or three key community members. This model received more positive feedback than the student-run model, but there were still some speculations. School personnel were still worried that overcommitted students would be the primary members of this club and at times they would get so busy that the duties of the club would be left behind. The help of a few community members would be very helpful, but it would not be fair to them to leave them with the slack and to leave them to run the club in the summer months. From these realizations came the idea for the final model: a community-run buying club with the participation of a few interested students and assistance from the school.

The community based model with the participation of the school is the one that I found to be the most promising for the Maranacook Community. This model consists of a few key community members that are committed to the buying club. They get the club up and running and through word-of-mouth they attract the interest of a few more members. Students become involved in varying ways. A few students who are very interested in the idea become permanent members of the buying club. The school gets more students involved by electing different clubs (such as student government, national honor society, interact club) to perform duties for the buying club as hours of community service. This way a variety of students become involved in the activities of the buying club and benefit from learning things about their local community that they were not aware of before. The school also acts as a mode of communication and distribution for the buying club. They have a newsletter, website, and large population that can positively promote the buying club. The school can also be a well known and central location to have the distribution site because many community members are parents and frequent the high school property regularly. This model has received very positive feedback from the people that I have interviewed because it allows for the buying club to run all year round and benefits a large variety of people.

Addressing Issues of a Buying Club:

Issue 1: Having the school as the distribution site

Each school district is going to have different thoughts about this based on availability of space and electricity consumption. The Maranacook superintendent said that it was a good possibility that we could have the distribution site at the school. There is room in our middle school storage space as long as any modifications to the space are paid for. There is also a possibility of having the refrigeration unit outside. This idea was met with concerns about the possibility of break-in and who would take responsibility if that happened. Having the site be at the school seems to make the most sense for our community, as it is a central location and a place that is frequented often by many community members.

Issue 2: Finding interested, potential members to start up the club

When I spoke to a former buying club coordinator I found out that she gathered a few interested friends and then sent out an e-mail explaining what they were starting and asking them to forward it to anyone they thought might be interested. Through this e-mail and word-of-mouth they were able to gather enough people (8-9) for an effective buying club.

Issue 3: How to introduce the idea of a buying club to students at the high school

At Maranacook High School there is a two day event called Teen Issues. Many different kinds of people come to speak and hold classes about health, sexuality, fitness, nutrition, drugs and alcohol, and much more. Although this specific event may not happen at other schools in Maine if there is a similar event this would be a great setting to present information about buying clubs, farmers, and local food. It is a relaxed setting where students can sign up to hear about this topic and that initial interest may turn into enough interest to become a member of the club.

Issue 4: Having a school teacher be the club advisor

As previously stated, this was addressed by many interviewees as a problem because of the huge responsibility that is the buying club. If the buying club were to be run as an extracurricular activity there would need to be more than one faculty advisor to share the work load when students are exceptionally busy. It puts a lot of responsibility on one person especially when working with other people's money and produce.

Issue 5: Having the buying club bank account run through the school

Each district will have different options and rules about this. The Maranacook district has a few possibilities. A student activity account could be applied for, but these accounts can only have deposits made and expenditures to keep the club running. Each transaction is detailed and they are not designed for a club that makes profit. Maranacook Education Foundation may help with an account we would have to speak with them. Other than that we would have to have an account not affiliated with the school.

Issue 6: How to negotiate pick up times

Pick at least two times of the week that are convenient for most people. Have at least two people that are members of the buying club available to help get consumers their order. For the people who cannot make those times have a person that they can call to arrange a pick-up time.

Issue 7: Having students help with buying club duties during study hall time

This would be helpful to the club and convenient for students, but our superintendent requests that an employee of the school be in attendance if this is to happen. This rule does not make this impossible, especially if there are a handful of teachers interested in this idea who are willing to help when they are free. These times would just have to be noted and students would have to let these teachers know ahead of time if they wanted to volunteer to help.

Issue 8: Students driving the distribution truck/trailer

This is not allowed if the club is at all affiliated with the school or is during school hours.

Issue 9: Having the buying club as the curriculum for a high school class

This idea has potential, but through my research I have come to the conclusion that it is not worth everything that needs to happen to make this a possibility. Upon speaking with the principal and superintendent, I have discovered that to create a curriculum that would support the buying club would be very difficult. The curriculum has to fit into the standards set by the Maine Learning Results and would have to be developed or found and brought to the superintendent and school board. They would have to accept the idea and vote on it, as well as find a teacher available to teach it. Then there is the issue of students being interested and having enough time in their schedule to sign up for the class. If there was interest it could become a very positive hands-on class, but it could also become a class that students take because they think it will be an easy A.

Through the feedback that I have gotten I believe that if there is a real interest in getting these ideas into the curriculum the best way to do it would be to fight for a piece of the health curriculum to be about nutrition and local food. This would probably fit best into elementary or middle school health class. Trying to establish an entire class curriculum about subjects relating to the buying club (small business, nutrition, local economy, farming) would be a very difficult venture and may not directly relate to more people becoming part of the buying club.

Issue 10: Having student-run farm plots on school property sell to the buying club for a profit

This is not a possibility because if one student was allowed to do this the opportunity would have to be extended to everyone.

Issue 11: Participation of the special education program

During my interviews I spoke with a few people who had the idea to have some involvement from the special education program. This would provide students in this program with a chance to go work with fruits and vegetables in a hands-on environment. If there is permission from the school and special education teachers than I think there would be immense benefits to having these students help with the distribution of food into individual orders under the watchful eye of their teacher.

Issue 12: Getting local foods through the buying club into the school lunch program

I spoke with the school lunch coordinator during my interviews because many of the people I spoke to were extremely excited about getting this local food into the lunch program. When I spoke with the coordinator he said that buying from the club was a definite possibility. The issues that would keep him from being able to order from the club are cost of the food (as he has a very tight budget), availability of the produce they need in the off season, and the labor that coincides with the produce he buys. He is very willing to spend a little more on local food, but if there is a large difference in cost than the budget will not allow these purchases. Once the club gets up and running the school lunch program should be contacted so that they can further explore the possibilities of being a consumer.

Benefits to students, farmers, and the community:

The buying club presents many benefits to the entire community. Student involvement in the club would provide the benefits of learning how to run a small business, understanding

farming practices, providing their community with local food, working with a variety of community members, and helping to stimulate the local economy. These benefits help broaden students horizons and they gain hands-on experience that builds off their school education.

Farmers also reap many benefits when participating in buying clubs. Farmers can sell their produce in bulk and go to one distribution site with only the produce they have sold. They get exposure in the community and a place to sell their excess produce. They do not have to pay someone to watch a farm stand for many hours with only a few customers. They deliver to a close location once a week.

When community members become involved as consumers or members of the buying club they gain many benefits. They become consumers and advocates of fresh, local food that do their part to enrich the local economy. They help to cut down on carbon emissions because the produce they are buying and distributing uses less packaging and has not been transported thousands of miles. The club brings community members of many ages together to work for safer, more nutritious food for their families and friends.

Characteristics of Potential Buying Club Advocates:

These are the characteristics that I found in many of the people I chose to interview who are advocates for the buying club:

- Eco-friendly
- Open
- Looking for ways to help others
- Dedicated to and interested in their school and community
- Driven
- Willing to try new ideas
- Interested in wellness and nutrition

The school employees and students that I interviewed I knew previous to my research. Because of this, it was easy for me to choose people who I thought would be interested in the idea of a buying club. If you are trying to start a buying club in your community in conjunction with your school system I would advise to go to the principal first. I would introduce the general idea to them and ask if they knew of any teachers that might be interested in the general topics surrounding the buying club. These teachers will have more direct contact with students and may be able to give you names of students they think might be interested. Through this system you should be able to contact some interested people who can continue to make further connections with people they think might be interested. Once these relationships are made issues can be confronted through the school administration and community.

Next Steps for the Maranacook community:

With the completion of my research I have done a lot of the preliminary work for starting a buying club in the Maranacook community, but there are many more steps that need to be taken to get the club running. First, a few dedicated community members need to be located. This can be done through references from the people that I interviewed or from word-of-mouth. These people need to have time and be enthusiastic about the idea. Once they are

formed than a mass e-mail needs to go out to find other interest and the school can be contacted to put a note in the newsletter and on the website. Through this process hopefully there will be enough serious interest to complete a working club.

The club can read about the steps to starting a club and begin to get interested farmers on board. They will have to meet with the superintendent again to solidify the possibility of using the middle school storage room and to decide what modifications they will have to make. Once they set up the distribution site and have a few farmers on board they can begin to gain some interest from the community. The buyers may begin as family and friends of members, but through word-of-mouth and communication through the school consumer interest should grow.

The club should be in contact with the school principal. She can give the contacts of school clubs to come and do community service and get involved with the buying club. If the club is interested they can also contact the school about giving a presentation during Teen Issues to introduce the idea to more students. The next steps for a buying club in the Maranacook community will take a lot of enthusiasm and time, but they are very possible and would have huge benefits for this community.

Conclusion

Establishing a buying club in the Maranacook community would be a very positive thing for students, farmers, and community members. Further steps should be taken to gain community interest and build a club. Student involvement in this club would be helpful in many different ways. It would benefit students learning and allow them to help their immediate community. The model of having a community-run club with student involvement is very effective because it ties together a diverse group of people and spreads the work load with a gain for all people involved.

The community model can work for many different populations and student involvement can be incorporated later on if that is easier. The club that starts as a small unit has lots of room to grow and be very successful. There are many possibilities after your club is up and running, such as having volunteers bring large print order forms to the elderly and then delivering their orders to them. Also, looking at the possibility of getting some special education students involved in distribution as a type of hands-on learning. These are only a couple of the many possibilities that can come out of the buying club.

Through my research I have located many challenges to this process, but also ways around these challenges. I have embraced and discovered more and more benefits to having a club like this be part of a community. I think that is worth all the struggles and challenges because the benefits are astronomical. After finding one or two initial people that have the time and interest to get the club started, it can blossom into something very positive for all who are involved. Having the school be a part of the process will help the club be more successful and will continue to educate the young people of the community.

Appendix A

Superintendent:

Could the school be the distribution site?

A: Yes, there is a good possibility it could be in the storage portion of the middle school. As long as any modifications to the storage room were paid for a walk-in cooler could be placed in that area as well as boxes for redistribution. Outdoor units also a possibility, but concerns of break-in and who would take responsibility for things stolen.

Could students participate in club activities during their study hall time?

A: As long as there is supervision by a school employee.

Can students do any driving of a distribution truck or trailer if this were a club affiliated with the school?

A: No

Can there be a bank account for the club that is through the school?

A: There are some possibilities, but each has rules. A student activity account could be applied for, but these accounts can only have deposits made and expenditures to keep the club running. Each transaction is detailed and they are not designed for a club that makes profit. Maranacook Education Foundation may help with an account we would have to speak with them. Other than that we would have to have an account not affiliated with the school.

If a student-run farm plot were to be established at the school could they make profit through selling some of their produce through the buying club?

A: No, because then the opportunity would have to be extended to everyone.

Mr. Abramson thinks that the idea of a buying club would be very good for our community. He thinks that it would work much better as a community run club with the participation of individual students and groups of volunteers. He hopes that when it is up and running he can answer any further questions that come up regarding the school or its properties.

Principal:

The Principal is a huge proponent of the idea of a buying club that involves the school community. During our interview she expressed her commitment to the wellness council and nutrition committee at Maranacook. They have been working hard to get more local, nutritious food into the school lunch program. They have tried to work with local farmers on this issue, but got a poor response. This club could provide a structured way for the school lunch program to purchase locally grown food.

She thinks that a club like this cannot be extracurricular, but students can be involved in a big way. She is willing to ask different clubs that are affiliated with the school to help with duties of the buying club as acts of community service. The school can also inform the community about the buying club through their newsletters, website, and facilities. She also thinks that we can get interest from individual students who want to be more involved with the club.

When I spoke with the Principal about the possibility of having the buying club be the basis for a school curriculum, she explained that there were many steps to this. We would have to develop the curriculum and make sure that it fit with the Maine Learning Results Standards. It would be hard to categorize what the curriculum would be based around, whether it was a health or business class. Then the class would have to be approved by the superintendent and school board and a teacher would have to be found to teach the class. She said that if it were to become part of the curriculum it may be easiest to add it to the health curriculum in elementary or middle school. It would be a real challenge to make this a reality, but not impossible.

The Principal stands behind the idea of a community buying club and would do all she could to help broaden interest in it and get more students involved.

School Lunch Program Coordinator:

I spoke with The School Lunch Program Coordinator about the possibility of him using the buying club as a way to get more local food into the school lunch program. He told me that the school has been trying to get more local food into the school by working with individual farmers and getting local food on special days or weeks. Therefore, he is very open to the idea of using the buying club to purchase local food for the lunch program under some stipulations. The largest factor is cost. He is able to pay a little more for local food, but if the cost is a big difference he has to go with buying from his distributor. Another factor is the amount of labor that goes along with the food that is purchased and how often produce is available that they can use. The produce that he would look to buy is any vegetables that go into a salad, not any root vegetables as they need too much labor.

He would love volunteers in the kitchen to help with cleaning and preparing the local food. He also said it was a possibility to do some canning of local food to have throughout the year depending on cost and the availability of volunteers. In general, he would have to compare his list of needed produce with his distributor and the buying club. Then he would make a decision every week about what he can afford to buy. He has storage available for the food, but must make sure of his timing as most produce only has a week long shelf life. Mr. Bridges was very positive about the idea of buying local food from the club as long as cost is reasonable for his budget.

Member of the School Nutrition Board and Community Member:

The member is an advocate of local, nutritious food and does a lot of hard work to get more of it into schools. When I introduced the idea of a community buying club to her she was extremely positive about the idea. She believes that we can get a lot of consumer interest in our community. She would love to see the school use the buying club as a way to get more nutritious food into the school lunch program. Once the club gets up and running she has many different ideas to bring it a step further, such as having access for the elderly community by getting them large printouts of the weekly offerings and having high school students or families volunteer to deliver their order to them. She thinks that the school is a great location for the distribution site and would love to see high school students get involved as an act of community service. She also had the idea of getting special education students involved as a means of hands-on learning that would help out the community. She wanted to know how soon this idea could come to fruition because she likes it so much.

Former Buying Club Coordinator and Community Member:

The former buying club coordinator and community member was extremely helpful as she was able to tell me how she started her own buying club in her previous community. She explained to me how she put out the idea to a few other young mothers that she knew. It was hard at first to find committed people, but after she located a few who were interested she sent out a mass e-mail that she asked people to forward to anyone they thought might be interested. Through this e-mail and word-of-mouth she soon had a group of about ten people that made up the buying club. They met once a month and did the rest through e-mail. They had to convince farmers to get on board with the idea and eventually they began to supply more produce to the club.

The buying club was a large undertaking, but very successful in the Rangeley community. They had a private account under the Rangeley buying club and a few key members could access the account. They did a small mark up to cover the clubs costs. On distribution days they had three or four people to meet the trucks; they broke down orders for a couple of hours and then had pick-up in the evening. She mentioned that having two scales is crucial to a quicker break down because when orders are broken down from the flats most things have to be weighed to individual orders and it can be hard to get as close as possible to the correct weight. She also mentioned that if a good relationship is built with a farmer it does not hurt to ask if they could break down their greens into 1/3 pound bags; this makes distribution a lot easier. She also suggested having the whole group watch the movie called, “The Future of Food” or “Plant, Animal, Vegetable” to understand more about local food.

She was very interested in my idea of having students involved in the buying club. She thought that it sounded like a great way to get students involved in the community and she could definitely see them being a huge asset to the club. She said that it would be very reasonable to have students help with breaking down orders as this is the most time consuming, laborious work that the club does. She thought that they would be more than capable of doing this well and could also help with communication between the farmers, club, and community. She was very positive about the idea of a buying club in our community. She was very successful in starting one in her community and believes that it can be done in the Maranacook community as well.

English Teacher:

The teacher was the first person I interviewed. She came to my mind immediately when I was deciding whom to interview. She is very invested in the school community and is very interested in being green and eating healthy foods. She is the first person that I told about my initial model of a student-run food buying club. She was very realistic and told me that she honestly did not think that would be the most effective model to use. She morphed the idea into a student-run model with community help and this became another model that I researched. She was very excited about the overall idea of a buying club and thought that if the model was tweaked that it could be a great benefit to the community and the school.

Physics Teacher:

The physics teacher was my second interviewee. He agreed with the other teacher’s thoughts about the impracticality of having a student-run club. He came up with the idea of having it as a community run club with student and school involvement. He thought that this might be best because of over-committed students and teachers that would not be able to carry out all the responsibilities of the buying club without help. He had the idea of students being

able to sort produce during study halls and helping as a means of community service. He would love to see something like this established for the community and the students.

Graduating Senior:

The graduating Senior is the first student that I interviewed. I chose her because she has spent her senior year establishing a farmer's market in the town of Wayne. She thought that the idea of a buying club was great and she would love to be a part of it. She suggested introducing the idea of the club at school once it gets up and running. She also suggested that students could help during study hall and sign up for a time when a teacher is available to go down and supervise. She informed me that the town messenger is a great way to get word out and also to hold an informational town meeting helps fuel interest. She is a student that would have loved to be a part of something like this during high school.

Incoming Junior:

The incoming Junior is the second student I interviewed. I chose him because he is planning on creating a farm plot on the schools property and harvesting food for the lunch program for his senior project. He also was very interested in the idea of a buying club. He suggested that the idea be presented at teen issues to get varied student interest. He also thought that students could use it as an opportunity to do some community service, especially if they are in National Honor Society and have a quote of service that they have to fill.

Appendix B

How to Start a Buying Club

1. Locate two or three dedicated individuals to start up the club:

These individuals must have enough time to dedicate to working on this project. They must use word-of-mouth and a mass e-mail to reach friends and family that they think may be interested in the idea. This should establish a solid group of members.

2. Delegate Positions:

Here are descriptions of possible positions as found on www.unitedbuyingclubs.com:

Buying Club Coordinator

- Primary contact person with distributor; communicates information from distributor to all members
- Telephone contact/telephone tree coordinator in case of bad weather, emergencies, etc
- Receives phone calls from prospective members
- Schedules and facilitates meetings
- Ensures that the co-op has written down its membership policies, job descriptions, etc
- Stays informed of policies and procedures; keeps members informed
- May also be Job Coordinator; works with members on all job-related issues

New Member Coordinator

- Maintains membership handbook, orients new members to co-op's policies and procedures
- Explains ordering procedures
- Does introductory job training
- Works with the Communications Coordinator to recruit new members

Communications Coordinator

- Produces newsletter, schedules, and all member communications
- Keeps members up to date on co-op concerns, ideas, issues and changes
- Communicates with local organizations and media on topics of interest to members
- Works with New Member Coordinator on ways to recruit new members (press releases, posters, etc)

Computer Services / Bookkeeper

- Enters members' orders into the computer, using FoodLink
- Collects payment from members and credits member's accounts
- Places grocery order via FoodLink, fax or email
- Adjusts final prices on member orders to agree with truck invoice
- Produces reports for distribution crew
- Produces member invoices
- Balances paperwork
- Keeps original truck invoices and other paperwork on file as needed
- Keeps membership records up to date
- Works with Treasurer to produce yearly financial statement for members

Treasurer / Bookkeeper

- Keeps financial records accessible to all members
- Collects checks from Computer Services person
- Deposits checks and pays all bills
- Records all expenses and keeps member financial records

Distribution Coordinator

- Meets truck, supervises unloading truck; does piece count
- Reviews paperwork for credits and debits with driver, signs for the delivery, and pays the driver
- Handles bottle/can returns for deposit
- Trains distribution crew; troubleshooter, may also be Claims Coordinator

Distribution Crew

- Some members specialize in repack distribution
- Distributes the product into each member's order
- Checks each member's product against their order or invoice printout
- Makes written notes of items missing, out-of-stock or damaged on the order
- Packages each member's order for easy pick-up

Claims Coordinator

- Keeps a copy of truck invoices and cover sheets
- Reports problems to Claims Department within 5 business days
- Receives calls from members on problems and reports to Claims
- Coordinates driver pick-ups of returned product, can/bottle returns, etc. with Distribution Coordinator

3. Deciding on a Distribution Site

Locate your local school, church, or community center. Ask for permission to use their site as a distribution facility.

4. Getting Farmers on Board

Locate local farms in your area and communicate with the owner about the idea of a buying club and their role in the whole process. Make sure they know where the distribution site will be and how the ordering process works.

5. Learning about the Ordering System

Get in touch with the State Department of Agriculture for information on a pre-established online ordering system. Investigate how it works and delegate who will be in charge of keeping track of it. Also establish someone to be available in case consumers need help ordering on it.

6. Gathering Consumers

Begin with friends and family of the members of the buying club and expand using word-of-mouth, e-mail, and local messengers or advertisers.

7. Keeping the Club Running Smoothly

Hold meetings about once a month and communicate through e-mail or telephone. Make sure you delegate specific members to help with breaking down orders and to be available during community pick-up times. Once things are running smoothly contact the local school community to locate interested students and to help spread the word to the community.

Local Foods Buying Club Operations Manual Template

The following are template documents for formalizing a Local Foods Buying Club (LFBC) and various documents that would assist a LFBC in developing relationships with farmers and local schools.

Any names and businesses listed in this document are based on a template developed for a pilot Local Foods Buying Club developed in the Readfield, Maine area under an USDA Federal State Market Improvement Grant.

The documents in this operations manual template include:

Your Local Foods Buying Club Transition Check List Template	2
Bylaws of a Local Foods Buying Club Template	3
Responsibilities of the Members of the Board of Directors Template	6
Responsibilities of Board Officers Template.....	7
Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement	8
Farmer/Producer Information Template	10
Farmer/Producer Rules Template	12
Farmer/Producer Application Form Template.....	14
Membership Rules Template	16
Local Foods Buying Club Management Responsibilities Template.....	20
Contract for Services between Your Local Foods Buying Club and the Food Coordinator Template	21
Proposal Template for Your Local Foods Buying Club to provide to the superintendent or school board of a local school system	22

Your Local Foods Buying Club Transition Check List Template

This checklist can be used when a club reaches a point where they want to formalize the organization. The process and timing can change, but the key factors to consider should be discussed and dealt with in the order given.

Transition Team

- Process (majority vote?)
- Note-taking (can we get a volunteer?)
- 2-3 more meetings

Club Operating Procedures (Week 1 & 2)

- Location (Middle School)
- Ordering System
- Day/Time/Frequency
- Distributors/Farmers/Products
- Responsibilities (Guidelines & Contracts)
- Fees (?)
- Volunteer Roles (See Volunteer Roles Handout)
- To pay a coordinator or not to pay – that is the question

Governing Structure (Week 2 & 3)

- Board of Directors/Advisory Board
- Executive Board
- By-Laws/Club Rules
 - Number and frequency of meetings
- Membership Guidelines
 - Responsibilities and Fees
- Budget

Bylaws of a Local Foods Buying Club Template

Approved by membership _____

1. **NAME:** The name of this organization is the _____ Local Foods Buying Club.
2. **PURPOSE:** The organization is a friendly association, the purpose of which is to enable members to obtain local food and farm related items from local producers.
3. **MEMBERSHIP:** Any person of eighteen years or older may become a member by application and payment of fixed annual dues without unlawful prejudice.
4. **DIRECTORS:** Directors are selected by vote of the membership at the annual meeting by simple majority. The Board of Directors shall consist of an odd number, initially five, with no director to serve more than two consecutive three year terms. All directors are ex officio members of steering committee. The Directors, working in concert with fiscal sponsor, may hire and establish the duties of and evaluate a club coordinator and other staff. The Directors will establish an annual budget and may vote expenditures of money for the benefit of the club. The Directors shall designate and establish a written agreement with a fiscal sponsor. The agreement shall be reviewed annually.
5. **STEERING COMMITTEE:** Steering committee shall serve as the central democratic structure for the membership, meeting approximately every two months as a part of the board meeting and open to all. All elected directors are ex officio members of steering committee, without restriction. Anyone may attend a steering committee meeting and any club member who attends three consecutive steering committee meetings becomes a steering committee member until such time as they fail to attend three consecutive meetings. The purpose of steering committee is to encourage greater member participation, provide guidance to the board of directors and support the orderly function of the organization. (See organization chart)
6. **MEETINGS:** There shall be an annual membership meeting for election of directors and other club business, bi-monthly (every two months) meetings of directors and special meetings as may be called by a petition of one-tenth of all current members, such a petition to be delivered to steering committee or the board of directors. The annual meeting shall be held at a time and place convenient to the membership and all meetings shall be open to all members.
7. **OFFICERS:** Elected directors shall select their own officers and make other decisions as they see fit, all such decisions being subject to review and vote by membership at an annual or special meeting. The officers shall be four in number.
8. **CHAIR:** The chair is the outward-facing officer and designated spokesperson for the organization, aiming to represent the consensus views of the club in a positive way. The president shall preside over annual, special and board meetings. The chair is the primary legal signatory. The chair may request a resignation from any board member deemed as creating an impediment to the board's work, subject to 2/3 board approval.

9. VICE CHAIR: The vice chair is the inward-facing officer and responsible for overseeing all internal operations and communications with club coordinator and fiscal sponsor. The vice chair may fulfill the duties of the chair as needed and may also serve as legal signatory in the absence of the chair, subject to board direction and approval.

10. SECRETARY: The secretary is record-keeper for the organization, maintaining membership rolls and preserving past documents such as meeting agendas, minutes, legal documents, financial records and key correspondence. These are maintained for the benefit of the organization, to serve as institutional memory and for review by members as requested.

11. TREASURER: The treasurer is responsible for maintaining current financial records, including accounts payable, receivable, general ledger and all tax documents. The treasurer may prepare financial documents. In the absence of the chair and vice chair, the secretary may serve as legal signatory if necessary, subject to board direction and approval.

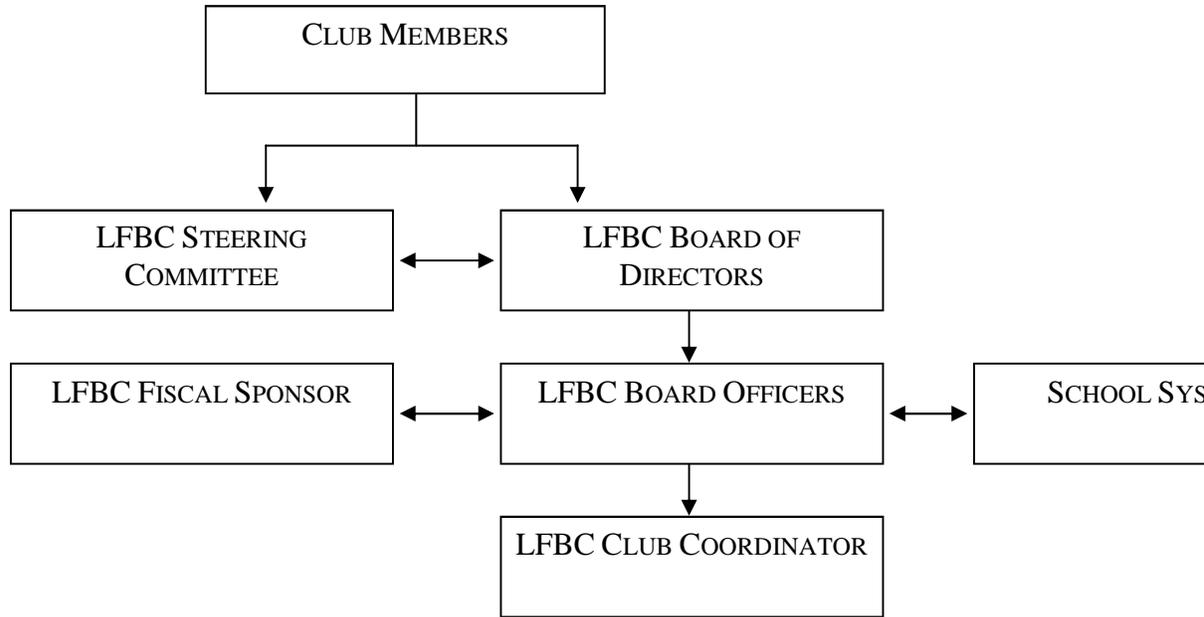
12. PROCEDURE: All binding decisions are made using a modified parliamentary procedure in which (A) a member makes a motion, (B) a different member seconds the motion, (C) amendments to the motion may be proposed and accepted or rejected by the original mover, (D) arguments are made and heard for the motion, (E) arguments are made and heard against the motion, (F) open discussion is held, (G) votes are taken and recorded, including the full motion and number of votes for, against and abstaining. Unless otherwise specified, motions must receive a majority of affirmative votes from total votes cast, with a quorum of at least half of those qualified to vote on an issue. The secretary shall keep a register of all decisions.

13. ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS: Adoption and amendment to these bylaws may be made by a two-thirds vote of members attending a general or special meeting, provided that notice of such meeting and the issue to be voted upon has been distributed to all members at least seven days prior to such meeting.

14. FISCAL SPONSOR: The club will engage a fiscal sponsor to assume financial control and liability for the club. The club will maintain a fiscal sponsorship agreement until which time the club decides to incorporate or restructure.

15. DISSOLUTION - The LFBC may be dissolved only with authorization by its Board of Directors at a special meeting called for that purpose, and with approval by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Members present. Upon dissolution, all remaining assets after payment in full of all its debts, obligations, and necessary final expenses, or after the making of adequate provision therefore, shall be distributed to such tax-exempt organizations be chosen by the existing Board of Directors

YOUR LOCAL FOODS BUYING CLUB



Responsibilities of the Members of the Board of Directors Template

Your Local Foods Buying Club

- 1. Members of the Board of Directors are elected for a three-year term, with the opportunity for re-election to a second three year term.**
- 2. Members of the Board of Directors are eligible to elect, and be elected, as officers of LFBC, as set forth in the By-laws.**
- 3. Members of the Board Directors are expected to attend all Board meetings. Failure to attend 3 out of 5 consecutive meetings, without extenuating circumstances, will be grounds for removal from office.**
- 4. Members of the Board of Directors are encouraged to be prompt, prepared, and ready to participate in meetings. Directors should gain a working knowledge of LFBC's history, mission, and activities, so as to be knowledgeable advocates and representatives of LFBC.**
- 5. Members of the Board of Directors provide policy guidance and advice to the Club Coordinator and any other staff regarding mission and goals, strategies, development and planning. The Board approves annual budgets.**
- 6. Members of the Board of Directors are expected to help with fundraising. Each individual shall be a paid-up member of the LFBC, and be fully invested in annual fundraising activities.**
- 7. Occasionally a board member needs to be removed from the board. In some cases, a conflict of interest or unethical behavior may be grounds to remove an individual from the board. In other cases, the behavior of a board member may become so obstructive that the board is prevented from functioning effectively. In person or on the telephone, the board president can request a resignation with 2/3 board approval.**

Strongly felt disagreements and passionate arguments are often elements of the most effective boards (and genuine debate). Please note that arguing for an unpopular viewpoint is not grounds for board dismissal! But if a board member consistently disrupts meetings or prevents the organization from working well, removal may be appropriate.

Responsibilities of Board Officers Template

The Chair shall:

- **preside over all meetings of the Executive Committee, the Board, and LFBC.**
- **set the agenda for the Board meetings;**
- **appoint a Nominating Committee no later than 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting.**
- **be a member of the Executive Committee;**
- **monitor the LFBC activities to assure that they contribute effectively to LFBC mission;**
- **maintain current knowledge of activities;**

The Vice-Chair shall:

- **in the Chair's absence, preside over all meetings of the Executive Committee, the Board, and the LFBC;**
- **facilitate communication between Board, Executive Committee, Steering Committee, Club members, Club Coordinator and Fiscal Sponsor;**
- **in the Chair's absence, set the agenda for the Board meeting;**
- **be a member of the Executive Committee.**

The Secretary shall:

- **be a member of the Executive Committee;**
- **be record-keeper for the organization, maintaining membership rolls and preserving past documents such as meeting agendas, minutes, legal documents, financial records and key correspondence.**
- **shall record the minutes, proceedings, correspondence, and other duties.**

The Treasurer shall:

- **be a member of the Executive Committee;**
- **be responsible for oversight of all LFBC finances;**
- **ensure that proper financial records are kept and reports provided;**
- **present financial statements at Board meetings;**
- **present the annual budget for the approval of the Board;**
- **on approval by the Board, may enter into contracts, sign checks and other financial documents in the name of the LFBC.**

Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement

This document could be used if the Local Foods Buying Club, if not set up as a non-profit or a for-profit business, may need another umbrella organization to manage the funds and set up a bank account.

SAMPLE

Between _____
 (Legal Name of Non-Exempt Group)
 and _____
 (Legal Name of Tax-Exempt Nonprofit Fiscal Sponsor Organization)

This Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement defines the roles and responsibilities of both the Non-Exempt Group and the Fiscal Sponsor Organization named above. This Agreement shall be in effect from: (Beginning Date) _____ through (Ending Date) _____

The role of the Fiscal Sponsor is to receive and disburse funds for the project in a timely manner and to maintain prudent and accurate records of all transactions as required by the State of Maine and the Internal Revenue Service. Any and all disbursements to the Non-Exempt Group are at the discretion of the Fiscal Sponsor.
 The role of the Non-Exempt Group is to request funds or reimbursement of funds from the Fiscal Sponsor in a timely manner in order to conduct the activities described in the Group's By-laws in addition, the Non-Exempt Group is to maintain prudent and accurate records of all activities as required by the State of Maine and the Internal Revenue Service.

By initialing below, the Non-Exempt Group and Fiscal Sponsor indicate that they have reviewed and come to an agreement regarding each of the following items:

Non-Exempt Group Initials	Fiscal Sponsor Initials	Items to be Agreed Upon
		Proposed project budget including specific line items
		General timeline for use of funds
		Fiscal Sponsor's policies for disbursement of funds (including time needed to respond to check requisitions)
		Decision-making authority regarding use of funds
		Administrative fees: Total amount or percentage Non-Exempt Group is to pay to Fiscal Sponsor (if any): _____ Terms of payment (if any): _____

This form must be signed by the Chief Administrative Officer, Treasurer or President of both groups entering into this Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement

Signature of Non-Exempt Group Officer	Date
Printed Name and Title	

Signature of Fiscal Sponsor Officer	Date

Printed Name and Title

Farmer/Producer Information Template

for the Local Foods Buying Club

Your Town Area
Date

The Your Local Foods Buying Club is an online buying club that combines the products of local farmers and producers and makes those products readily available to the area market.

Benefits to Club Members: Members combine their buying power to purchase local foods in larger quantities or in bulk. The online ordering system means convenient 24 hour shopping during the buying cycle (7 days). Pick up is once every other week at the “Your drop off location”, where the students and club members help sort, weight and bag orders.

While availability and selection will decrease in the wintertime, this is a year-round buying club. Members will have the opportunity to conveniently purchase locally year-round.

Benefits for farmers: Your Local Foods Buying Club members are, by definition, interested in purchasing local foods. Farmers/producers enjoy a ready made market anxious for their products. Club members handle marketing and recruitment of new members allowing farmers to focus in growing and producing food for market.

In addition:

- Online shopping is an enormous industry these days. The buying club will be a year-round avenue for selling products.
- Farmers will be able to drop off their goods and head right back to the farm!

A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO BE SIMPLE & EASY

The “Your Town” area has spoken. People want access to local foods grown by people they know and trust. Each order cycle farmers/producers will be contacted by the club coordinator or another club member and asked for the following information:

- what items would you like to have listed on the website
- price per unit, unit descriptor (i.e. pound, each, bunch, pint etc.) and minimum amount needed to be sold for each product. Farmers can list as few or as many products as they like.
- include tax in the price of taxable items. Farmers are solely responsible for keeping track of and reporting tax to the appropriate authorities.
- how best to reach you weekly for either availability of products or to place an order (we encourage using email)

This information is captured in an Excel spreadsheet (Or other method you choose) to make reporting easier for all parties involved.

INSERT a paragraph about the software you are using for the buying club, and how the farmer accesses the software.

THE SCHEDULE, YOUR ROLE AND ANTICIPATED TIME COMMITMENT

Bi-Weekly report of available products (15 minutes or less) – Every other week, farmers/producers will check in with the buying manager or club member, letting them know what products are available, how much, and confirming the price per unit. Ideally, this check-in will happen using an Excel spreadsheet via e-mail.

We will supply you with an Excel product sheet (or other sheet you choose to use) and an order cycle schedule outlining product deadlines and drop off dates.

Behind the scenes work –

- The deadline for the manager to upload products onto the website will be noon on the first Saturday of the order cycle.
- Once products are loaded, the website goes live for buying. It stays live for 7 days (Sat – Sat). An e-mail will go out to club members and other folks who have expressed interest in the club, letting them know that the week’s online shopping can begin.
- The website closes on Saturday evening.
- By 5:00 pm on the following Monday farmers/producers get a report of all the products that have been pre-ordered for pick-up.
- Farmers/producers will need to confirm or deny the order, based on availability etc. Farmers/producers will then package or bundle what has been sold and label it (sometimes green lettuce and romaine lettuce look eerily similar).

Bi-Weekly Drop-off – Drop off times will fluctuate seasonally. The Club Coordinator will work with you to determine the best schedule. Farmers/producers drop off their order at (Your drop off point) in Your Town. You are welcomed to volunteer anytime to help with the breakdown process.

Payment – Farmers/Producers will submit and invoice to club coordinator on delivery day and will be paid no later than two weeks thereafter.

Enclosed is a copy of the club rules for farmers and producers an application form for those interested in participating in *Your Local Foods Buying Club*.

Please call or email if you have any questions.

Contact Name: _____
Email address _____

Farmer/Producer Rules Template

It is the responsibility of the Farmer/Producer/Distributor to:

- Comply with the State Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources regulations pertaining to the items you sell through the *Your Local Foods Buying Club*, including licensing and certification. (See: website listed here)
- Deliver all pre-ordered products on designated pickup days, packaged in the pre-ordered quantities.
- Indicate farm or farmer/producer name, address and phone number, product name, and quantity on all food packages.
- Provide accurate information about food availability to the *Your Local Foods Buying Club*.
- Review website postings for accuracy.

Eligibility of farmer/producers and products

All farmer/growers must grow or process the items they sell.

All farmer/producers must be willing to deliver their products to (Your drop off location) on the day and time designated for pickup. We encourage farmers to work together to find efficient ways of transporting their products.

All products must be grown, raised, and/or processed by the farm or farmer stated on the application.

Products must be of high quality. The club maintains the right of refusal at delivery if products do not meet quality standards.

Each farmer/producer is solely responsible for the quality of their product.

The *Your Local Foods Buying Club* does not allow any substitutions or returns.

Cost to the Farmer/Producer

Administration of the club is the biggest expense. Farmer and producers share the costs of operating the club. Your share is based on the following expenses.

Typical Annual Expenses	
software	\$900.00
coordinator (\$13.5/hrx 10 hours/month)	\$1,620.00
fiscal agent	\$240.00
Misc (gloves, snacks for student helpers, etc.)	\$90.00
	<hr/>
	\$2,850.00

You have several payment options:

Non-volunteer.....\$90/yr (\$3.46 per order cycle)	Volunteer.....\$0/yr (30hrs per year/2.5hrs per month)
Non volunteer.....\$45/six months (May – Oct)	Volunteer.....\$0/yr (15hrs 6 mths/May - Oct)
Non volunteer.....\$45/six months (Nov – April)	Volunteer.....\$0/yr (15hrs 6 mths/Nov - April)

Taxable items

Each farmer/producer is responsible for keeping track of state taxes owed from the sale of their taxable items. Vendors will include the tax in the price of taxable items. The description of the item will state, “5% [or 7%] sales tax included.”

Farmer/Producer Application Form Template

Contact Name(s): _____ Farm/Business Name: _____

Mailing Address:

Street Address: Check here if same as mailing _____

Business Telephone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Best hours to call: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Website (if applicable): _____

Please list farm items and products you will sell to the club:

Vendor Agreement:

I hereby apply to participate in the Your Local Foods Buying Club.

I agree that prior to offering any products for sale I am/will become familiar with the rules and agree to comply with the rules outlined in this document.

I authorize release of my business contact information for use on the Your Local Foods Buying Club

I understand that individual product liability is my responsibility. I do hereby release the administrators of the Your Local Foods Buying from liability due to defects, contamination, or other issues with my product(s).

Signed _____ Date _____

Print name signed above

Please make my checks payable to:

I have included a check for membership (*Please make check payable to LFBC*)

- Non volunteer.....\$90/year
- Non volunteer.....\$45/six months (May – Oct)
- Non volunteer.....\$45/six months (Nov – April)
- Volunteer.....\$0/yr (30hrs per year/2.5hrs per)

- Volunteer.....\$0/yr (15hrs 6 mths/May - Oct)
- Volunteer.....\$0/yr (15hrs 6 mths/Nov - April)

Please return to:

Membership Rules Template

Your Local Foods Buying Club

Welcome! Please take a few minutes to read and understand this document. You will be responsible for adhering to the rules.

From Then to Now: A Brief Account of the Your Local Foods Buying Club

Put in a short history of your buying club activities, who is involved, etc.

Buying Club Basics

A Buying Club is a group of friends, neighbors or interested local families who pool their household food demands to allow them to purchase larger quantities of local food. Buying clubs are a wonderful way to help local farmers sell more products in a more organized, collective way. In addition, because they bring together a group of buyers, buying clubs provide farmers with more income and more profits while helping local families to continue to have access to local, fresh, and nutritious food. Club members can create their own marketplaces of any vendor they choose, as well as their own rules of participation and operation.

How to Use the Website to Buy Food

Put in a description of the software you are using and how to use it.

Buying and Pick-up Schedule

The LFBC has a two-week buying schedule which means fresh local food and products available for you to pick up at (Your drop-off location) every two weeks. You will be given seven days in which to reserve products online. The schedule will be subject to change in response to holidays, but in general, members are able to order online every other week from Saturday to Saturday with pick up on the following Thursday. Details will be posted on the website - <http://> Please add the website to your favorites as it is not the easiest url to remember.

Payment for Your Food

Payments will be made on the day of pick up with either cash or a check. You will not receive a receipt of your order after reserving it online since final sales are not determined until products are delivered to the pick up location; **therefore please do not fill in your check prior to checking out at pick up.** It is a good idea to print your order reservation so you remember what you ordered. You may always check in with the buying club coordinator prior to pick up to find out whether your order has been honored.

Speaking of the Buying Club Coordinator

LFBC has a paid club coordinator to manage the day-to-day operations of the club. The club coordinator reports directly to the club directors.

Your Responsibilities

LFBC relies on the involvement of its members, farmers and producers to keep the club operational. There are many moving parts to a buying club and many jobs to be managed. The club coordinator does not have the capacity to handle every job. Therefore the club requires members to volunteer, yet we understand our lives are full and not everyone has the time to volunteer. In an attempt to ensure parity, the LFBC has developed membership choices.

Levels of Membership

\$15/yr plus 15 volunteer hours a year

\$30/yr plus 10 volunteer hours a year

\$75/yr (0 volunteer hours)

YOUR MEMBERSHIP DOLLARS COVER THE FOLLOWING COSTS

ITEM	YEARLY FEE
SOFTWARE (\$75 PER MONTH)	\$900
CLUB COORDINATOR (\$13.5/HRS AT 10HRS/MONTH)	\$1620
FISCAL SPONSOR (ASSUMES LIABILITY FOR CLUB)	\$240
MISC SUPPLIES (CLEANING SUPPLIES, GLOVES, MARKERS ETC)	\$90
TOTAL	\$2850

LFBC Member Volunteer Responsibilities

(Volunteering is a Condition of Membership unless you choose to increase membership dollars. Listed below are a number of roles volunteers have been asked to take on. As we refine the workings of the club, these roles may change or go away completely. We are open to any skills club members may want to share including, carpentry, fund raising, data management, teaching etc, etc. Please let us know what skills you would like to share with the club.

NON-DELIVERY DAY

Board of Directors – see By-laws for responsibilities (approximate time commitment – 15 hrs per year)

Education Coordinator - member of Steering Committee

- Seek out free nutrition education and cooking suggestions to offer to the public based around local foods (e.g. Cooperative Education).

Volunteer Coordinator

- Check weekly volunteer calendar and call to remind each volunteer scheduled. Members are responsible for finding their own coverage if they are not available to volunteer. Recruit and keep track of members skills and make contact with member once a project has been identified in which their skills can be put to use.

Please read Club guidelines before submitting a request for account set-up. Thank you!

Your Local Foods Buying Club Account Set-up (Insert a process for signing up for the online ordering systems). An example is below:

Welcome and thanks for joining us! This is the first step to buying fresh, delicious, local food online. Simply fill out this form and wait for an email containing your username and password. Then log on to: ([insert website](#)) and start shopping. It's that easy! Since you have taken the brave route of signing on as we continue to improve this system, your membership is free for the first four ordering cycles. That's two months free. After that the monthly membership fee jumps to a whopping \$1 per month per user. Please review the Club Guidelines (above) for details and bon appétit!

* Required

First Name *

Last Name *

Email *

Phone *Where you can be reached on pick-up days.

Address *

City/Town *

Zipcode *

Club Guidelines *

- I have read, understand and agree to the Club Guidelines.

Please choose level of membership and mail your check to _____

- Volunteer Membership - \$15 yearly fee 15 volunteer hrs per year
- Volunteer Membership - \$30 yearly fee and 10 volunteer hrs per year
- Non-Volunteer Membership - \$75 yearly fee

I would like to share the following skills with the club?

IMPORTANT: Some Pointers and Explanations about this Ordering System...

(Insert Buying Club website here) (Bookmark this address in your browser)

1. All products are on this page, so you are looking at one contiguous scroll of products listed in alphabetical order under each category.
2. If you do not click on Add All to Cart located between each categories items to your cart before leaving the Products page, they will disappear when you return and you will have to do a “do-over” – never fun
3. If you try to order more of a product than what is in a case or unit (which is referred to as the bulk size) you will receive a message like this... **ERROR: The amount you entered, 9, is larger than bulk size of 8 for My Hill Orchard Apples - Macintosh. If you would like to order this product, please [try again](#).** When you click on “try again” you will go to the individual product page of the product you just tried to order. If you do indeed want to order 9 bags of apples you will have to order first 8 (which is the bulk size or case), then return to the product page and order one more. Yes, we know and we will work toward making the ordering system handle automatically rolling over into a new “case”.
4. Once you have filled your basket (another word for cart) and are finished shopping (remember you can come back and add to your basket until the end of the buying cycle), please, please, please copy and paste it somewhere for your files. You may even want to bring a copy on pick up day. This system does not generate invoices or order histories yet.
5. THERE IS NO SUBMIT ORDER BUTTON. If an item is in your basket, it is recorded behind the scenes and the market managers have all the information they need. Again, you can come back anytime and add to or delete from your basket until the end of the order cycle.
6. So here’s the final thing... What you are essentially doing is “reserving” items because there may be some items in your order that may not come in. Why? Well, this is a buying club and the expectation is a large amount of a single item will be ordered by the group. This ensures lower prices for you and a greater return for the farmer. If a minimum order isn’t reached the farmer simply can't afford to deliver. If a minimum order (also referred to as a case or split) is not filled, it will be up to the farmer to decide whether or not it’s worth their time and effort to deliver. Nobody wants anyone driving miles to deliver a pound of green beans.
7. We will send an email what products will not be at pick up due to unfilled cases or product unavailability.
8. Thank you so much for your continued patience with this process!

Local Foods Buying Club Management Responsibilities Template

Your Local Foods Buying Club

Position: Club Coordinator

Reports to: Board President and Board of Directors

General Description: The Club Coordinator is responsible for directing the daily operation of the Your Local Foods Buying Club and for the club's continual progress toward short/long range goals.

Professional Responsibilities:

- Be responsible for daily operation of the club – includes logistics - drop off market location, and functioning protocol for ordering, breakdowns and deliveries.
- Help farmers/producers and members get set up and utilize mofm.buyingclubsoftware.org system.
- Train and supervise member volunteers.
- Provide outreach and networking with other regional groups.

LFBC Coordinator Responsibilities

(Paid Position – Approximately 120 hrs per yr)

New member coordinators

- Check Google docs for new member sign ups.
- Register new members in software, send welcome email, and add as member in the email contact list.
- Update welcome email with new order window dates and any other messages.

Farmer/Producer Product Availability, List and Order Coordinator

- Communicate with farmers/producers over phone or email about product availability each order cycle.
- Update product list, upload onto website and open order window.
- Excel experience required.
- Close order, compile order, call and email farmers/producers with orders.

Member Coordinator

- Send reminder emails via buying club Gmail account about order window dates, pick up dates and new products.

School Contact Coordinator

- Communicate with school to develop programs to involve students (both middle and high school).
- Communicate these programs to the volunteer coordinator.
- Check with appropriate school personnel about scheduling special meeting (every few months).

Contract for Services between Your Local Foods Buying Club and the Food Coordinator Template

Purpose

The following contract outlines an agreement between _____ and Your Local Foods Buying Club (LFBC) for contract services to manage the daily operations of the club. Responsibilities include:

- Be responsible for daily operation of the club – includes logistics - drop off market location, and functioning protocol for ordering, breakdowns and deliveries.
- Help farmers/producers and members get set up and utilize mofm.buyingclubsoftware.org system.
- Train and supervise member volunteers.
- Provide outreach and networking with other regional groups.

LFBC Responsibilities

LFBC will provide the support, oversight and monetary compensation. LFBC agrees to be responsible for managing funds associated with the buying club and will make payments to producers on a timely basis.

Duration

This contract will be in effect from the signing date through one year hence _____.
The contract is subject to review no later than 30 days prior to end of contract date.

Compensation

LFBC agrees to pay up \$13.5/hour for approximately 120 hours for tasks outlined above. Services will be paid monthly upon receipt of an invoice. Invoices should be submitted to the Treasurer of LFBC by email at _____ or mail to _____.

I agree to the terms of this contract:

_____, Date: _____, Contractor
_____, Date: _____, Chair
SS# _____ Your Local Foods Buying Club

Proposal Template for Your Local Foods Buying Club to provide to the superintendent or school board of a local school system

Who we are:

- The Your Local Foods Buying Club is a group of community members who will come together because they are interested in obtaining local produce and other reasonably priced food and speciality products from local farmers and other businesses.
- The Buying Club Coordinator is _____

How We function:

- We locate and involve local farmers and they list their available products online each week at slightly higher than wholesale prices, but below retail price
- Community members log in to a website to see what is available, place an order and make payment online.
- On the designated drop off day, producers deliver their fresh foods directly to the food buying club location in bulk in food-grade shipping containers.
- The club coordinator and volunteers are responsible for breaking down the orders into individual member orders.
- Food is stored in appropriate refrigeration and members arrive during dedicated hours to pick-up their food. Payment can be made online or by check or cash at the time of payment, however, a credit card is required to reserve the order.

Our Intentions for Working with Your Town Community School:

Space Needs:

- Access to 90 sq. ft. to 150 sq. ft. of indoor space with access to at least one outlet AND a facility for dropoff, sorting, and pickup

Proposed space:

-Storage Space (for the buying club space) and the School Cafeteria (for dropoff/sorting/pickup space)

In the indoor space we would supply:

- A refrigeration/freezer unit .
- A table to use for storing supplies (boxes, scales, utensils, etc.) and products that do not need refrigeration

In the dropoff/sorting/pickup space we would need:

- access to a few tables and water for cleanup (if available)

Access to the School:

The club (approx. 2 to 8 members) would need access to the school one day per week:

- 1-3 hours for farmer drop off
- 1-2 hours for sorting
- 1-3 hours for customer pick up (could be arranged in coordination with the school schedule)

Help Spreading the Word:

- By granting us space on the school website and in the school newsletter to get the word out about the buying club

- By considering hosting an event put on by the buying club to inform the community about what we are doing

How the community can be involved:

- As club members
 - with interest in nutrition, local food, farming, community development, etc.
- As consumers
 - that can go to the online ordering site, browse, purchase products, and pay through a secure system; then pick up their whole purchase during the designated pick up time at the school
- As farmers
 - that list and deliver their products during the designated farmer drop off time
- As students and teachers
 - with interest in learning more about local food, farming, or business AND as a way to earn community service hours while helping their community (by helping to sort after a drop off or help during customer pick up, etc)

Benefits to having the buying club site at the school:

- Connecting local food producers with families and the school
- Having working relationships with farmers that could potentially be part of the green house/garden program
- Opportunity for the school lunch program to purchase from and/or partner with the buying club
- Outlet for students to gain community service experience, learn about the benefits of local food, and build connections with farmers and community members
- Could open up grant possibilities for the school

Contacts:

- Buying Club Coordinator _____
 Email: _____ Phone: _____

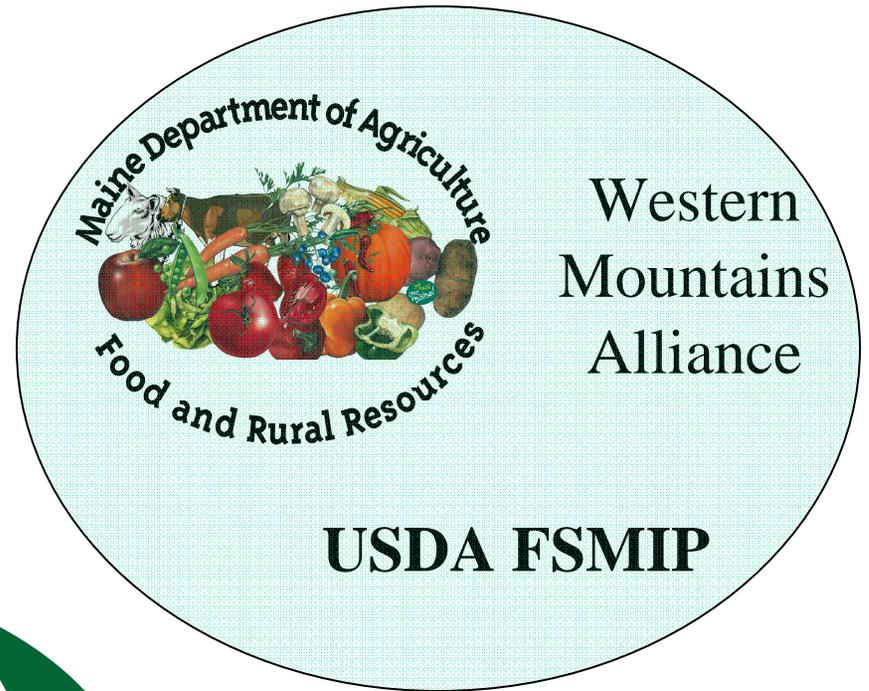
Local Food Buying Club Financial Analysis Tool		
Prepared by Maine Department of Agriculture		
FILL IN ONLY THE BOXES IN BLUE		
Food Buying Club Name		Income and Expenses Per Month
NET PROFIT/(LOSS) BEFORE TAXES		\$ 64.00
TOTAL FOOD PURCHASES PER MONTH		\$ 3,600.00
Actual Food Purchases Per Month		
Tide Mill Farm		
Gardenside Dairy		
Boot Cove Bread		
OR		
Food Purchase Estimator		
Members ordering per week	30	
Order size per person per week	\$ 30.00	
Subtotal Food Purchases per month	\$ 3,600.00	
REVENUE		
Membership Fees		
Number of Members	80	
Annual Membership Fee (monthly amount)	\$ 2.00	
Subtotal Membership Fees		\$ 160.00
Food Markup To Help Cover Costs		
Mark-up to be Paid By Club Members	15%	
Total Food Purchases	\$ 3,600.00	
Subtotal MarkUp Income		\$ 540.00
Mark-up Charged to Farmers	10%	
Total Food Purchases	\$ 3,600.00	
Subtotal MarkUp Income		\$ 360.00
Other Income		
Fundraisers		\$ 100.00
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUES		\$ 1,160.00
OPERATING OVERHEAD EXPENSES		
FBC Coordinator Labor		
Hours worked	20	
Hourly Wage	\$ 12.00	
Subtotal Labor		\$ 240.00
Percent of Food Sales	10%	
Subtotal Labor		\$ 360.00
Other Payments		
Automobile Expense		\$ 10.00
Contributions		

Dues and Subscriptions		\$	-
Freight & Trucking		\$	-
Equipment Rental		\$	-
Licenses and Permits		\$	10.00
Marketing (Constant Contact)		\$	15.00
Postage and Shipping		\$	10.00
Printing and Reproduction		\$	15.00
Supplies			
	Plastic Bags	\$	10.00
	Tote Bags	\$	100.00
	Markers	\$	1.00
	Subtotal Supplies	\$	111.00
Telephone		\$	50.00
Travel		\$	-
Utilities			
	Electricity		
	Heat		
	Subtotal Utilities	\$	-
Rental of Space		\$	10.00
Membership Fee Waivers			
	Number of new members		0
	Target amount of food allowed for waiver per customer	\$	100.00
	Percent Markup Waived		5%
	Subtotal Fee Waiver Expense	\$	-
Farm Fresh For ME Services			
	Online Ordering System		
	Food Purchased	\$	3,600.00
	Percent Markup paid to Farm Fresh For ME		5%
	Subtotal Online Ordering Expense	\$	180.00
	Equipment Rentals		
	Buying Club Financial Technical Assistance		
	Online Ordering Technical Assistance		
	Banking Services		10
	Insurance Services		45
	Subtotal Farm Fresh For ME Other Services	\$	55.00
Other Expenses			
	Fund Raiser Events Expenses		
Line of Credit Interest Rate			
	Subtotal Operating Expenses	\$	1,066.00
FIXED OVERHEAD EXPENSES			
Depreciation			20
Interest Expense			10
Taxes			
Professional Fees			
Repairs			
	Subtotal Fixed Overhead Expenses	\$	30.00
TOTAL ALL FIXED AND OPERATING (OVERHEAD) EXPENSES		\$	1,096.00



UPDATE AND FUTURE PLANS

A new program
supporting
development of
online
local food buying
clubs





Big picture

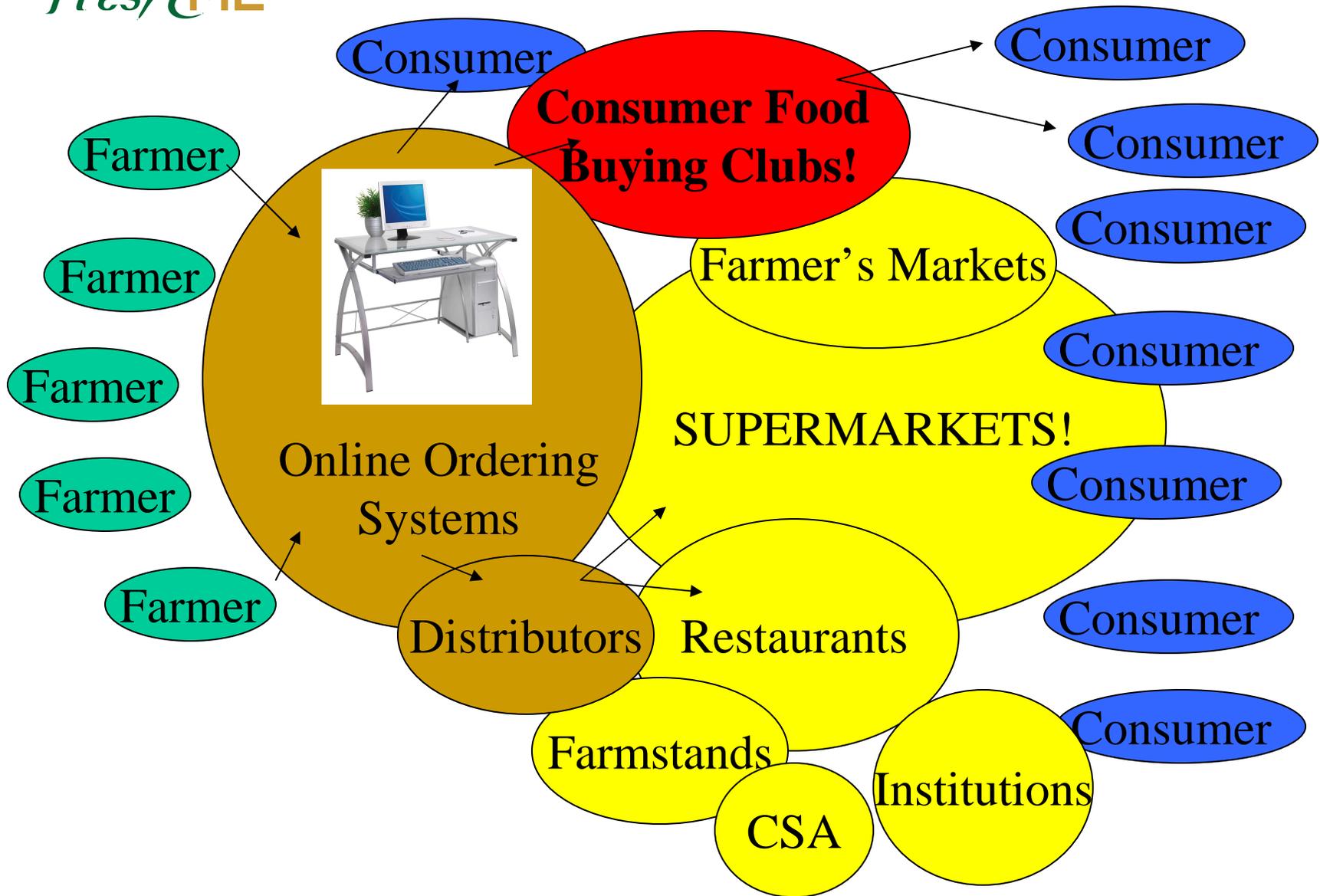
Recession/Depression continues (60% of
Mainers are low income or in poverty)

School Nutrition and Gardens increasing

More action towards community, buy local,
fresh, price conscious family



Why focus on Local Food Buying Clubs?



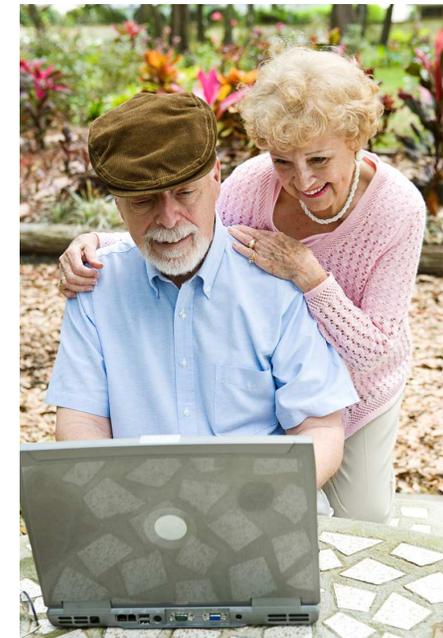


Farmers say...

- Other local markets tapping out
- Farmers markets take too much time and labor
- Farmstands...limited locations
- PYO....lack of time unless tied to agri-tainment
- CSA...consumer lack of time, variety of produce
- Wholesale....small farms hard to get into market and be profitable
- *Buying clubs new way to aggregate consumers*



Why focus on Young Families and Boomers?

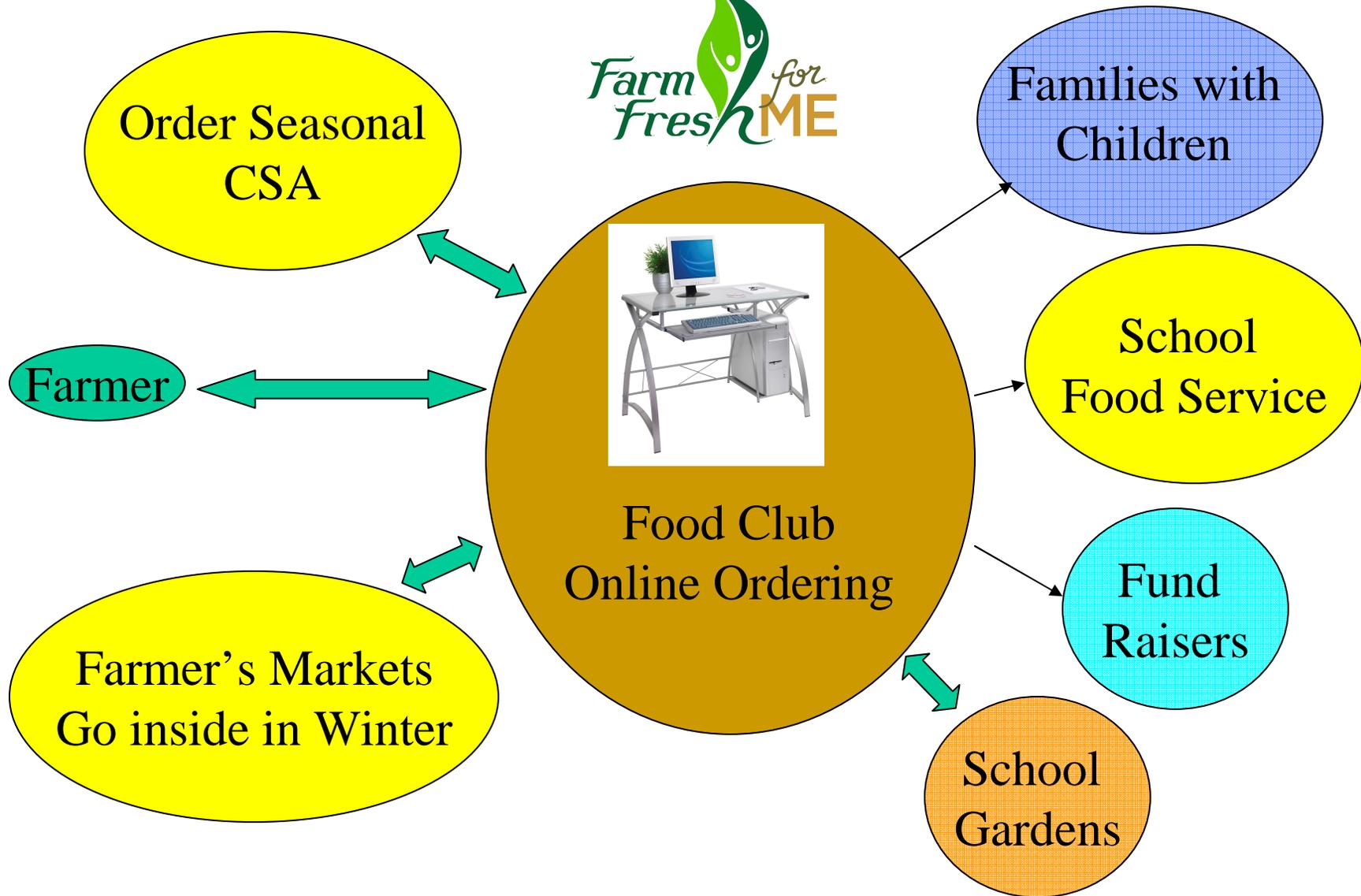




Consumers say..

- Younger generation wants better food, health conscience.
- Convenience
- Trend is to constantly be online (Iphone)
- Older generation time saving, connect with 70's past when food coops were "in".
- Sense of community spirit, Support local farmers.

Why Schools? – The Connection with students and Community





The Pilot - We established a local food buying club at Maranacook School





We successfully tested an online ordering system





Your online source
for fresh local food
from Maine



HOME
FAQ'S
FIND A BUYING CLUB
START A BUYING CLUB
RESOURCES

Farm Fresh for ME is a newly established initiative of the [Maine Department of Agriculture](#) in collaboration with [Western Mountains Alliance](#) and other for-profit and NGO's who are supporting development of food buying clubs throughout Maine. The ultimate goal of Farm Fresh for ME is to increase the market for small family farms in their local communities while providing nutritious, healthy and affordable foods to Maine families.

Farm Fresh for ME embraces the concept of consumer food buying clubs. A consumer food buying club pools the demand of several households, allowing them to purchase larger quantities of food at less than full retail price. Local food buying clubs are a wonderful way to help Maine farmers sell more products in a more organized, collective way.

This fall, funding from [USDA](#) and the Maine Department of Agriculture will help **Farm Fresh for ME** pilot an innovative buying club model in [Readfield](#) where [Maranacook Area School's](#) support will enable student involvement in the project and a distribution site at [Maranacook Middle School](#). Farm Fresh for ME is also seeking to support the development of additional buying clubs. For more information contact Tricia Cook at trcook@westernmountainsalliance.org.

Maranacook Buying Club



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Maranacook Local Foods Buying Club

This is a pilot club relaunching at the beginning of September. To learn more, see the club's [guidelines](#), visit its [website](#) or jump right in and [join the club!](#)

FAQ'S

Find a Buying Club

Start a Buying Club

resources



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Connecting local Farmers and consumers one click at a time



Results to date in first few months...



- Went from 5 to 100 families -50 order regularly.
- Went from \$500 to \$1,500 in bi-weekly sales. Average sale is around \$40 per customer.
- 13 local farms signed up to sell. Now up to 18 farmers are selling to club.



*The Numbers that may
make it go...*

- Minimum 80 members - \$2.00 per year club membership
- 30 families ordering weekly at \$30 per sale weekly
- 30% markup on products
- Free space and student help.
- Farmers deliver.



*The numbers that may
make it go... Overhead
operating expenses*

Expenses

SOFTWARE (\$75 PER MONTH)	\$ 900
CLUB COORDINATOR (\$13.5/HRS AT 10HRS/ MONTH)	\$1620
FISCAL SPONSOR (ASSUMES LIABILITY FOR CLUB)	\$ 240
MISC SUPPLIES (CLEANING SUPPLIES, GLOVES, MARKERS ETC)	\$ 90
TOTAL YEARLY EXPENSES	\$2850



*The numbers that may
make it go... Consumer
requirements to fund
expenses*

Income from members

\$15/yr plus 15 volunteer hours a year

\$30/yr plus 10 volunteer hours a year

\$75/yr (0 volunteer hours)



*The numbers that may
make it go...Producer
requirements*

Non volunteer.....	\$90/year
Non volunteer.....	\$45/six months (May – Oct)
Non volunteer.....	\$45/six months (Nov – April)
Volunteer.....	\$0/yr (30hrs per year/2.5hrs per)
Volunteer.....	\$0/yr (15hrs 6 mths/May - Oct)
Volunteer.....	\$0/yr (15hrs 6 mths/Nov - April)



What Local Food Buying Clubs Need

- **Enough sales to have paid coordinators**



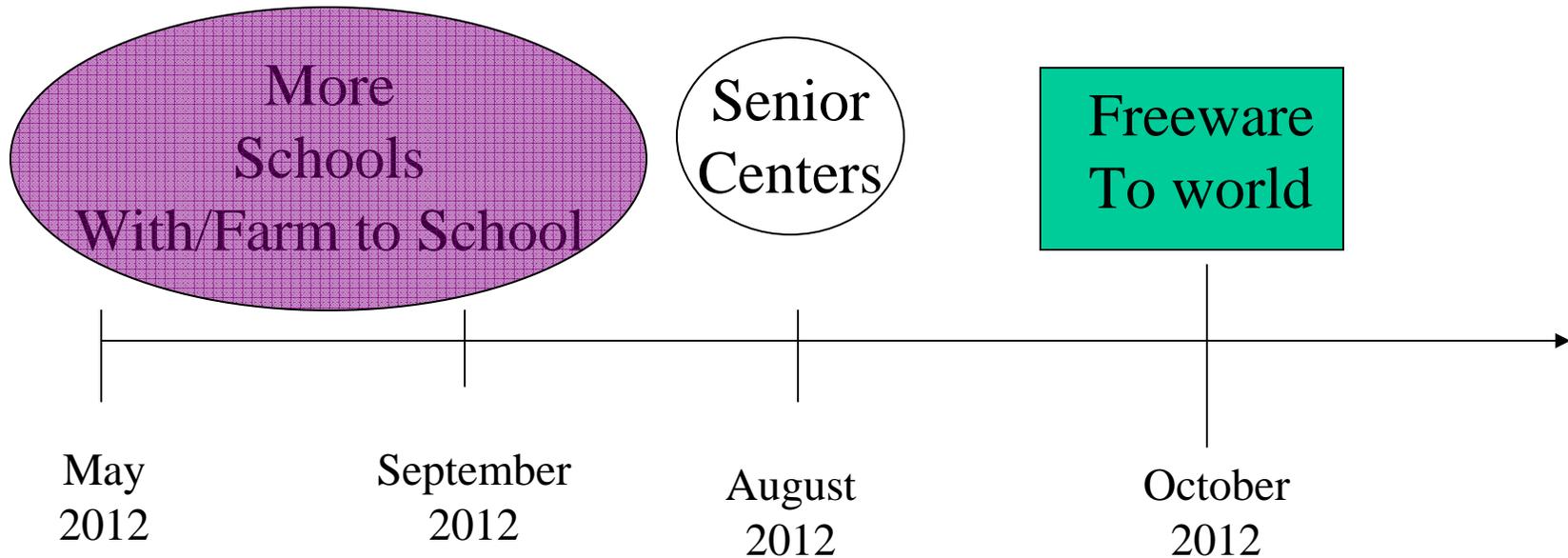
- **“low cost” Locations to distribute the food – Schools!**



- **Refrigeration**



Gameplan going forward





For more information please contact:

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www.FFFME.com