To build a thriving local food and farm system across Illinois, we need to lay the foundation with fair food and farm policies, like the ones below, that create healthy communities, build stronger local economies, conserve natural resources, and make local food available for all.

**Grow the Health & Wealth of Illinois through State Procurement of Local Food**

*Good Food Purchasing Policy*

In 2017, the City of Chicago passed a resolution to adopt the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) that transforms the ways agencies purchase food by promoting health, well-being, and strengthening the local food economy by guaranteeing that a percentage of food is purchased locally. Our goal in 2020 is to continue to work with a coalition of groups, including the Chicago Food Policy Action Council, to pass a resolution to form a GFPP Task Force. The Task Force will assess the current state of procurement and market opportunities by Illinois state agencies.

**SUPPORT Healthy Food Access at Farmers Markets While Keeping SNAP Dollars Local**

*Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund SB3523/HB5672 (Feigenholtz/Butler)*

Calls for a $500,000 state investment to match Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) sales at farmers markets through the "Double Value Coupon Program." The program doubles the purchasing power of low-income families to afford healthy local produce, while also incentivizing them to spend their SNAP dollars with Illinois farms, keeping federal SNAP dollars in our state, supporting local farms and growing the local economy. In 2019 we worked with partners in the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity to protect the Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund. Now to make this program a reality, we need the state to appropriate $500,000 to the Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund.

**More Cottage Food in More Places**

*Expanding Sales Avenues for Cottage Food Producers SB3077/HB4632 (Koehler/Guzzardi)*

This bill would expand sales avenues for cottage food producers, beyond just farmers market sales, to include all direct-to-end user avenues, such as fairs and festivals, home sales, and online sales for delivery-- enabling cottage food producers to grow their customer base and their local food business. The bill also adds frostings to the list of products that can be made in a home kitchen-- which means more cupcakes will be coming to a farmers market or fair near you!

**BRING Farm Fresh Foods to Public Schools**

*Better School Lunches for our Kids HB426 (Gordon-Booth)*

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) as it is currently administered under Illinois law requires school districts to select the lowest bidder from among those vendors who submit bids. Unfortunately, some vendors bid low to secure a contract, and then cut their service or the quality of their products. The school district suffers a year of bad food service and then must go through the bidding process once again, hoping for a high-quality food vendor at the lowest bid. In contrast, 48 other states that participate in the NSLP allow for a matrix format of evaluation, which awards points based on various criteria apart from just lowest price.

**Protect Your Right to Garden**

*Right to Garden Act SB3329/HB4704 (Bennett/Harper)*

Last year a coalition of groups worked together to support Nicole Virgil, a resident of Elmhurst that was asked by her city government to remove the season extension structure on her property. Nicole used this structure (hoop house) to grow fresh vegetables for her family in the cold winter months. We are coming back to the legislature with a bill that gives property owners, like Nicole, the right to grow food on their property and provides protection to the property owner and his or her garden from state, county, and local authorities.
To build a more regenerative farm system across Illinois, we need to lay the foundation with farm and land policies, like the ones below, that create a more fair and profitable path for the regenerative agriculture movement.

**FUND CLEAN WATER AND HEALTHY SOIL EFFORTS**

**SB3462 Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy fund (Villivalam)**

In order to address the state’s difficulties with implementing the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, this legislation would create a fund in statute for the first time dedicated to nutrient loss reduction and provide additional fiscal resources to agencies implementing the strategy. The Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy is a strategy created by state agencies and organizations to reduce nutrient pollution into Illinois waterways that have contributed to the Gulf of Mexico “dead zone.” Currently, Illinois is a top contributor of nutrient pollution to the Mississippi River, which is immensely harmful to not only the Gulf, but the safety, cleanliness, and wildlife of our own waterways.

**HELP FARMERS PUT CONSERVATION PRACTICES ON MORE ACRES**

**Increase Funding for Fall Covers for Spring Savings Program**

In 2019 the Illinois Department of Agriculture adopted the Fall Cover for Spring Savings crop insurance reward program. This program rewards farmers for planting cover crops and reducing nutrient pollution by rewarding approved applicants $5 per acre of covers planted, the following year on their crop insurance invoice. There were nearly three times more acres applied for than funding available. Our ask is to double the funding at $600,000 to cover more acres.

**INVEST IN SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

**Restore Full Funding for Soil Water Conservation District’s**

Soil Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) are the boots on the ground that keep our soil healthy and our water clean by assisting farmers with the implementation of conservation practices. Last year, the Illinois Capitol Budget appropriated $7.5 million to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), which have faced nearly a 70% budget cut since 2008. Though we have celebrated many conservation successes, such as the S.T.A.R Program and the Fall Covers for Spring Savings Program, we need to recognize that those two programs add a larger workload for SWCD’s, and they deserve a restoration of full funding, to maintain (and increase) necessary staffing levels at District offices.