



Growing Our Local Food Economy

After the Harvest Conference

September 5, 2025

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Co-Founders, Argus Farm Stop

Local food is **at risk**.



Farms in Washtenaw County

	<u>1950</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>% change</u>
# of farms	2,884	1,236	-57%
<u># of farms with:</u>			
Milk	1,232	25	-98%
Orchards	1,659	39	-98%
Pigs	1,407	48	-97%
Cattle	2,079	161	-92%
Poultry	1,686	148	-91%
Vegetables	181	109	-40%
Honey	26	16	-38%

Michigan	155,589	52,194	-66%
Indiana	166,627	58,695	-65%
Ohio	199,359	75,462	-62%
Nation	5,382,162	2,109,303	-61%
Arkansas	182,429	45,071	-75%

- Average age of a farmer is 58
- 40% of agricultural land in the US will transition in ownership within 20 years
- Once farms are lost, they are hard to replace

Data Sources: USDA Census of Agriculture 1950, 2012; American Farmland Trust

Farmers make **little money.**

Farm Share
\$0.15



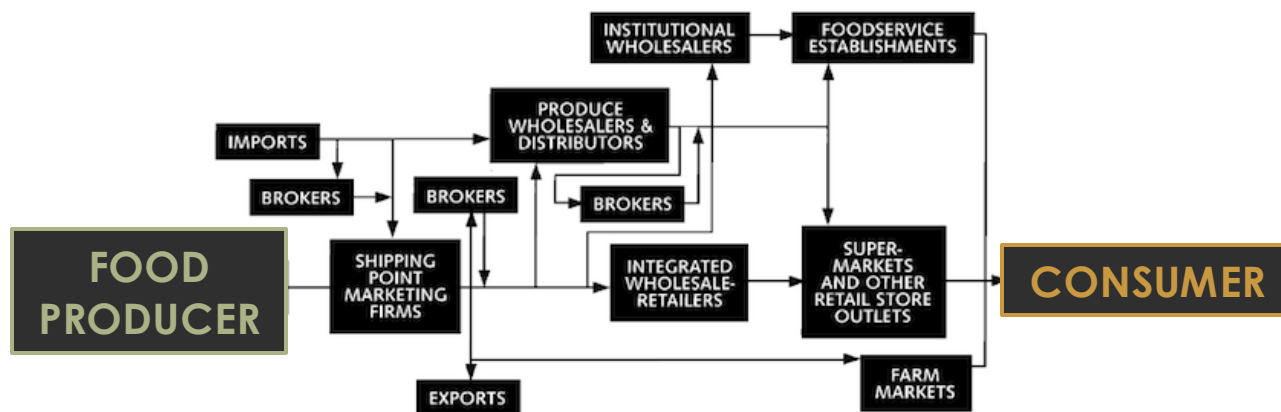
Marketing
Share
\$0.85

- Selling through traditional channels, farmers receive **only 15 cents** per dollar.
- Middlemen and distributors **take 85 cents** per dollar in shipping, receiving, and markup costs.

Data Source: USDA Economic Research Service, 2022

The US food system favors huge, **non-local** producers.

99.3% Indirectly Purchased



- Food travels long distances – on average 1 500 miles
- **Our food system is vulnerable** to climate change, oil shortages, aquifers, and other disruptions (like COVID-19).

0.7% Directly Purchased



- **Direct** connection between producer and consumer
- **Producers make more money**, because there are no middlemen or distributors

How can we make it easier to shop local?

FARMERS' MARKETS + **GROCERY STORES** = **FARM STOPS**

- Farmers receive most of the sale
- Local, fresh, and in-season
- Authentic
- Educational
- Builds community

- High quality refrigeration and display
- Convenient
 - Open year-round
 - Offers one-stop shopping

- Combining the best of both shopping experiences
- Amazing local products for customers
- Sustainable margins for local farms

What is a Farm Stop?

1. Brick and Mortar store

- Everyday market stocked exclusively with only local products
- Single checkout line to purchase from all farms at once
- Most farms selling at Argus continue to sell through farmers markets



What is a Farm Stop?

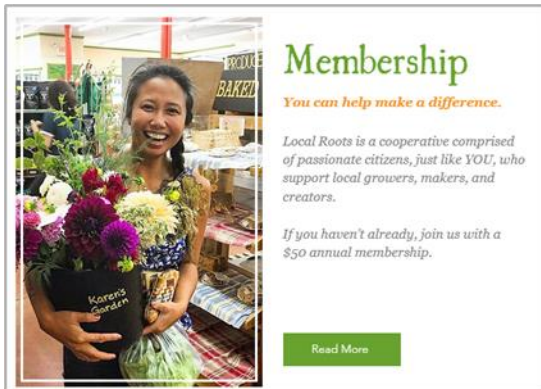
2. Direct-to-Consumer sales from farms and producers in a retail setting (a.k.a. consignment)
 - Breaks traditional grocery paradigm
 - Customers understand the math (e.g. 70% paid to farms). Farms paid 4-5 times the national average.
 - Builds community and mutual trust
 - “Ultra Local” model highly differentiated from traditional grocery.
 - Very low food waste; High farmer satisfaction



What is a Farm Stop?

3. Mission-directed to Grow Local Food Economies

- Argus is organized as a L3C entity (mission-driven LLC)
- Other Farm Stops have formed as L3C's, cooperatives or non-profits.
- Need to evaluate tradeoffs (fund raising, governance/decision-making, attractiveness to staff, farms and customers)



Cooperative



Non-Profit



L3C
(Mission-Directed LLC)

Farm Stop Perspectives:

Farms & Producers

- Application and product mix curation
- Communication
- Product Drop off & Coffee time
- Sales reporting and Payments

Customers

- Incredible store for shopping in season and supporting local farms

Staff

- Career path in mission-direct entity focused on local food



We have grown beyond one store to a multi-faceted organization over 10+ years

2014



325 W Liberty Opens

2020



Subscriptions

2022



1226 Packard Opens

2017



1200 Packard Opens

2020



Deli

Argus Impact

- We opened in August 2014 with 40 producers and have grown to over 300 today.
- 2024 another year of growth
 - \$6.9 million in sales
 - Top 75 farms received over \$44,000 on average
- Argus has paid out over \$26 million to local farms and food producers since 2014.



Farm Stops provide year-round income for farms and extend seasonality

Yellow  = “extended season”

Purple  = “storage”

- Farm Stops have reliable & comfortable year-round shopping
- Expanded use of cold weather growing and storage techniques
- 36% of Argus annual produce sales take place from January - May.
- Expanded retail outlets encourage new products

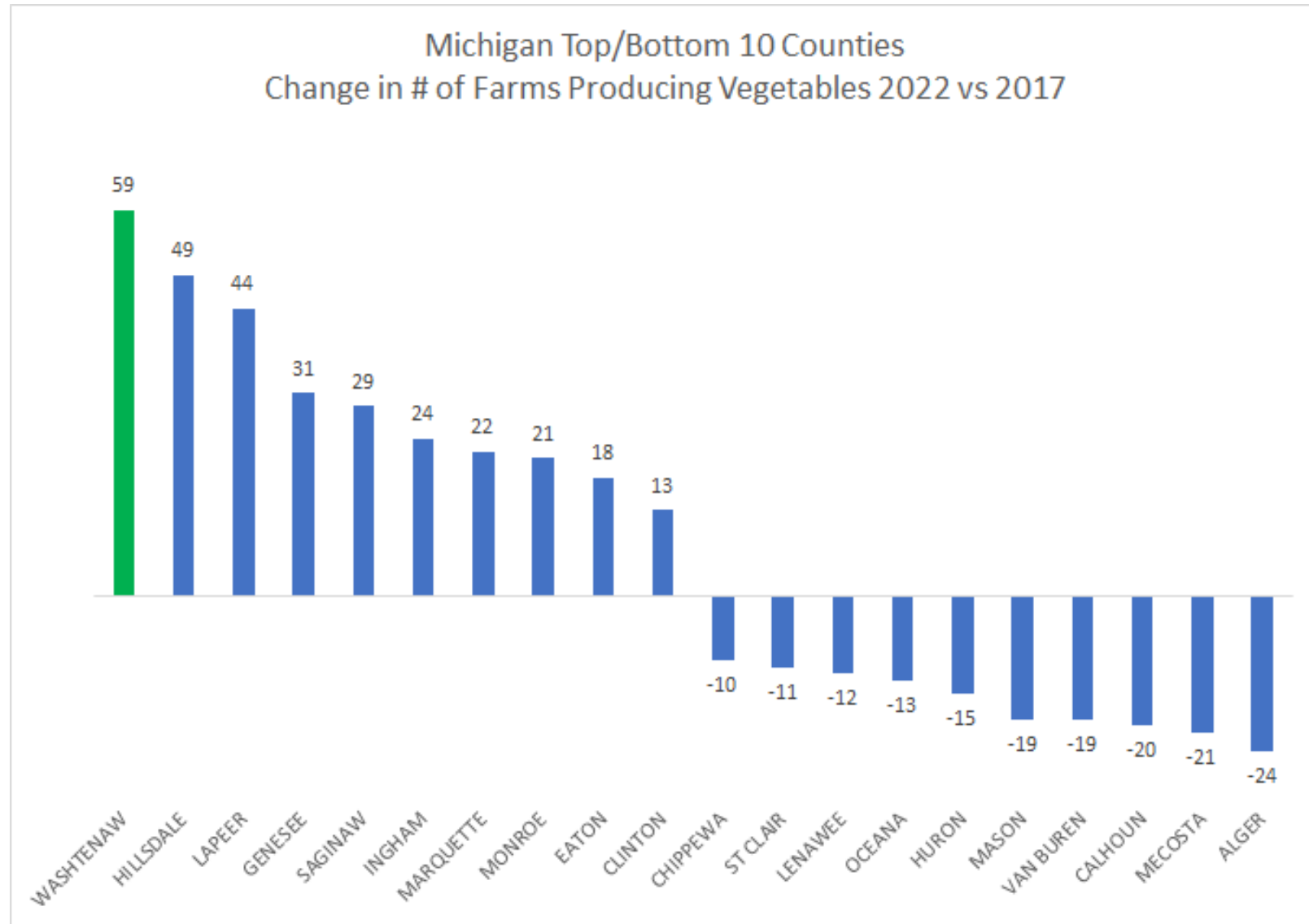
MICHIGAN PRODUCE AVAILABILITY

CROP	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Arugula												
Asian Greens (Mizuna, Pac Choi, Tatsoi, etc.)												
Asparagus												
Beans, Fresh (Green or Wax)												
Edamame (Green Soybeans)												
Beets												
Broccoli												
Brussel Sprouts												
Cabbage												
Carrots												
Cauliflower (inc. Romanesco)												
Celery												
Chard and Beet Greens												
Corn												
Cucumbers												
Eggplant												
Garlic												
Greens (Beet, Collard, Mustard, Turnip)												
Kale												
Kohlrabi												
Lettuce (Leaf, Iceberg, Romaine, Bibb, etc.)												

Source: MSU Center for Regional Food Systems

“Typical” MI farmer’s market season

Washtenaw County is #1 in Michigan for Growth in Number of Farms Producing Vegetables



Source: USDA Ag Census 2022 and 2017



**Argus creates a
community
tapestry.**



Argus Expands Food Access

- Argus has solved the biggest hurdle facing most local food communities: *the logistics of getting products from local farms to customers.*
- Well positioned to grow food access in conjunction with funding partners
 - Double Up Food Buck (Fair Food Network)
 - Michigan Fitness Foundation
 - Customer donations (round up at the register)
 - Local farms now economically stabilized – and in a position to help.

“Are there ever customers that come in the store looking for food, but unable to pay? Part of why we are in food is to feed the hungry, so please load them up with Pine Ridge Organics food and send them on their way with my blessing.”

The Farm Stop model is gaining momentum



Is the Farm Stop Revolution Upon Us?

A hybrid between a farmer's market and a co-op store, farm stops are popping up across the country, helping customers access local food year round.

#Access #Business #Food & Drink

by Steven Corso · May 14, 2024





FARM STOPS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Des Moines, IA

Chelsea, MI

Empire, MI

Marquette, MI

Ann Arbor, MI

Peninsula, OH

Wooster, OH



Clatskanie, OR



Lander, WY



Ash Grove, MO



Bloomington, IN



Madison, IN



Lancaster, OH



Huntington, WV



Jonesborough, TN



Wheeling, OH



State College, PA



Craryville, NY



Millerton, NY

The Farm Stop Model: 1,2,3

Communities with an existing farmers market are ideal. Demonstrates that there are local farmers/producers and customers. Can be rural/urban, affluent/lower income.

1. Need a leadership team
2. Need a store location (2,000 - 4,000 ft²)
3. Need funding (~\$350k to renovate and open)

