Local Food is defined in many ways, but most importantly, it means food from farmers in your county, state, or region — whether you buy it at a farmers market, restaurant, or grocer.

You can buy most of the food you need from Indiana farmers, including flour, beans, corn meal, popcorn, veggies, fruit, syrup, honey, jam, meat, sausage, poultry, eggs, and fish, to name a few.

The advantage of buying local is that you support a local food economy that sustains our agricultural heritage and family farms and retains food dollars in our state economy.

Over 3600 farms sell directly to consumers in Indiana, resulting in $26.9 million in sales, an increase of 20% since 2007. Direct sales outlets include farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture, on farm sales and roadside stands. In Indiana, we have:

- 176 farmers’ markets (twice as many as 2009)
- 230 community supported agriculture (CSA) farms
- 230 agritourism oriented farms

Nearly 1000 Indiana farms sell through intermediated channels, or retail outlets, such as grocers, restaurants and institutions. In addition:

- 1791 farms produce and sell value-added commodities
- 991 farms sell to retail outlets

“Nearly 150,000 farmers and ranchers nationwide are selling their products directly to consumers, and 50,000 are selling to local retailers. Industry estimates valued local food sales at $7 billion in 2011, reflecting the growing importance of this new market to farm and ranch businesses.”

-Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack

6% of Indiana farms sell directly to consumers

Indiana is home to 60,938 farms that operate on 14.7 million acres of land. Nearly half of those farms (27,377) are less than 50 acres. Despite a long-term decline in the number of farms (-12% since 1978) and a large increase in farmland value (+135% since 2000), Indiana remains one of the top farming states.

In 2007, for the first time since 1935, the number of farms in Indiana and throughout the United States increased. In Indiana, all of the new farm growth was in small farms, driven by a 21% increase in the number of farms less than 50 acres.

References
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$18.6 billion
Amount Hoosiers will spend on food in 2014

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Indiana residents will spend $18.6 billion on food in 2014. Thirty-eight percent is purchased away from home and 62% of food is purchased for home consumption, totaling $11.6 billion including:

- $1.6 billion bakery and cereal products
- $2.5 billion meat, poultry, fish and eggs
- $2.1 billion fruits and vegetables
- $1.2 billion dairy products
- $4 billion snack and other foods

10% = $1 billion
If we substituted 10% of our current at-home household food budget with locally grown and produced food, we would generate over a billion dollars of economic activity in Indiana. That’s just $458 per year per household

According to the National Restaurant Association, the top trends in restaurant food are locally sourced meats, seafood and produce. Four of the top ten trends for bartenders include locally sourced and produced products. If restaurants, public schools and institutions purchased 20% locally grown and raised products, Indiana would capture an additional $1.5 billion in our local food economy.

2.5 multiplier effect on local economies generated by direct wages and income from farm, food and forest workers in Indiana (ISDA report)

There are three major areas of focus for the Purdue Local Food Program to support the growth of the local food economy for Indiana:

1. Communities of consumers – it is important for consumers to be able to identify Indiana grown and produced products at the point of sale. Consumers can then make the choice to purchase local and regionally grown food. Consumers can promote local food purchasing through the communities where they live and work.

2. Infrastructure and value chain – less than 50% of food grown in Indiana is processed for added value. Often, raw agricultural products leave our state and return as imports for consumer purchasing. Rebuilding local food infrastructure for the distribution, processing, storage and aggregation will increase the economic development potential of local products for sale.

3. Agricultural food production – nationally, 81% of the farms selling into local food economies gross less than $50,000 per year, yet 70% of the value of local food sales are from large farms, grossing more than $250,000 per year. As such, the opportunity for diversification of local food products exists for all farms in Indiana, large, mid-sized and small.