

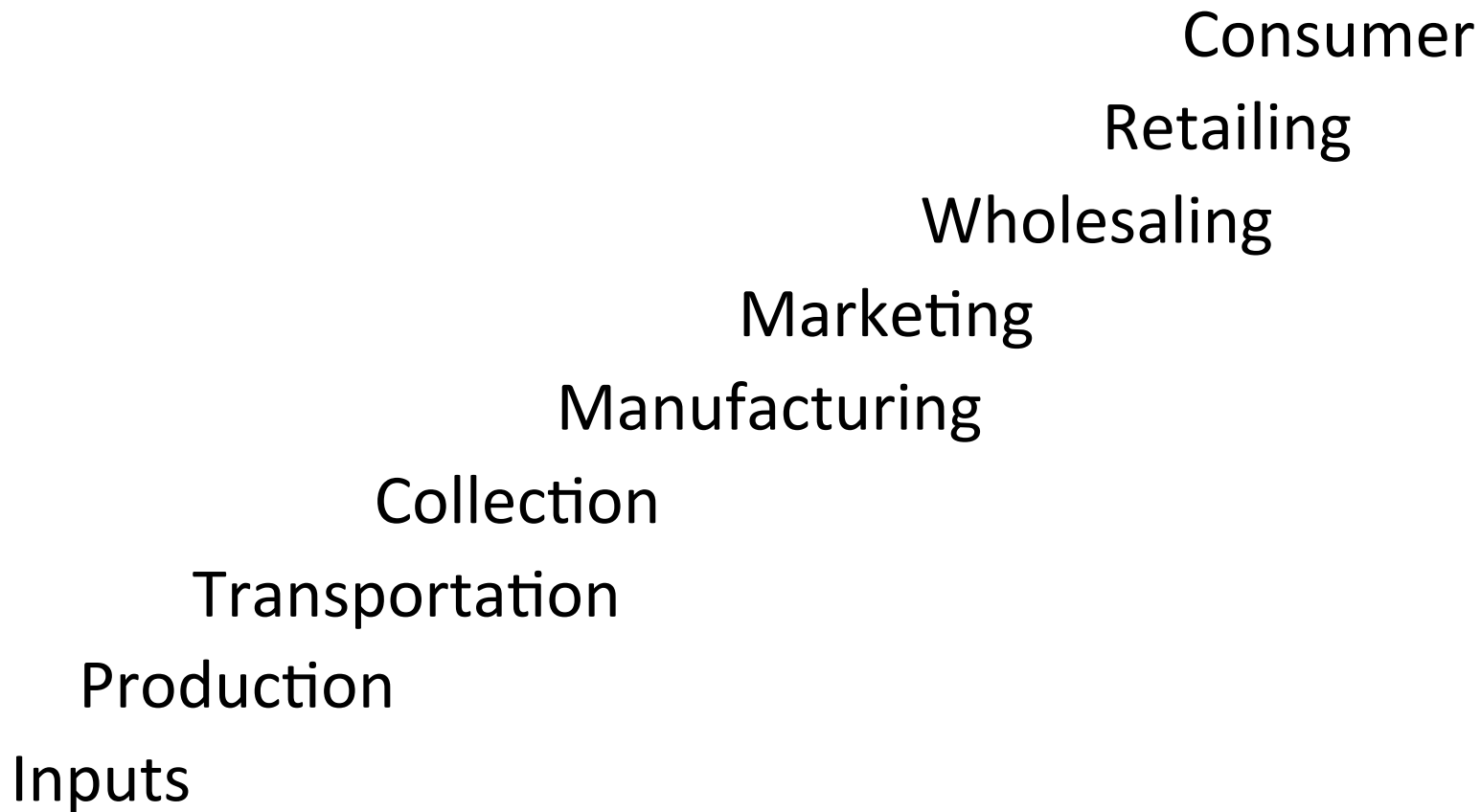
Sustainable Community Food Systems

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Sustainable Community Food System



The Global Food Chain System



Criticisms of Current Food System

- Loss of local food diversity
- Loss of consumer relationship to farmer & the land
- Food safety & consumers
- High costs to the environment
- Decreased diversity of plant & animal genetics
- Effects on producers & rural communities
- Increased concentration of ownership & control by few firms in processing sector
- Continued high food insecurity rates despite decades of significant federal policy intended to address
- Significant food waste

Consumer Trends and Community Food Systems

- Consumer trends indicate opportunity to develop a stronger local food system.
 - Increasing consumer concerns about food safety
 - Consumer perceptions about organic food are changing
 - Consumer buying behavior is changing
 - Consumers are willing to pay more for a premium product

Consumer Trends and Community Food Systems

- Consumer trends (continued)
 - Consumers are becoming more health conscious
 - Purchasing seasonal foods is gaining in popularity
 - Consumers are increasingly concerned about quality of life
 - Many consumers recognize the importance of supporting their local economy

Sustainable Community Food Systems: Working Definition

- A system in which “food is grown, processed, distributed and consumed in an ecologically and socially responsible manner on a local, community scale” (Wilkinson et al., 1997).

Sustainable Community Food Systems: Definitions

- In addition to *Economics*, sustainability can be defined in terms of three other E's: *Ecology, Ethics, & Equity*
 - ***Ecology***: Long-term food sufficiency, food systems that do not destroy their natural resource base
 - ***Ethic***: Food systems that are based on a conscious ethic regarding humankind's relationship to other species and to future generations
 - ***Equity***: Food systems cannot be sustainable if there are gross inequities in the distribution of food or means to produce food

Sustainable Community Food Systems: Main Idea

- Foods are produced, processed & distributed as locally as possible
- Supports a food system that:
 - preserves farmland
 - fosters community economic vitality
 - requires less energy for transportation
 - offers consumers the freshest foods

Sustainable Community Food Systems: Elements

- Involves a social & economic relationship between producers & consumers
- Fosters community self-reliance by reducing dependence on outside food producers & distributors
- Includes training & technical assistance for farmers, processors, & distributors

Sustainable Community Food Systems: Justification

- The design of food systems has many social, economic, & environmental implications:
 - **Environmental:** the way in which food is produced has a significant impact on local environmental conditions such as erosion and water quality. It also has a significant impact on land use patterns.

Sustainable Community Food Systems: Implications

- **Economic:** The markets for food products, and the prices paid by these markets, influences the size and nature of farms that can be economically viable. Further, money generated from the food system has many economic benefits or drawbacks, depending on how the system is operated.
- **Social:** Food systems play a significant role in shaping one's sense of community, relationship with other community members and connection with place. They can also foster local self-reliance. Other important social implications of food systems include consumer nutrition and access to an adequate food supply by all community members.

Sustainable Community Food Systems & Local Development

- At the basis of this assumption lie several related arguments
 - ***Import substitution***- replacing imported goods with goods produced locally is a powerful economic development strategy
 - ***Locally-owned processing plants***- (those that add value to locally grown crops) generate and retain significant capital in local economies
 - ***Cities and their surrounding regions***- may be the most vital and important economic actors

Barriers to Achieving Sustainable Community Food Systems

- **Farmers/ Rancher/ Fishermen**
 - Inadequate number of sustainable producers
 - Lack of basic information on sustainable production techniques
 - Poor understanding of the economics of sustainable practices
 - Potentially high economic transition costs to sustainable production
 - Poor general business management & marketing skills
 - Poor access to existing markets

Barriers to Achieving Sustainable Community Food Systems

- **Processors**

- Poor access to local consumer markets
- Small & dispersed local markets
- Poor production economies of scale
- High start up costs
- Dearth of efficient, low cost, small-scale processing equipment
- High costs to meet health regulations
- Poor access to financial capital
- Regulations geared to large-scale industrial operations

Barriers to Achieving Sustainable Community Food Systems

- **Distributors**

- Poor general business management & marketing skills
- Poor access to financial capital
- Lack of infrastructure for alternative distribution systems
- Distance to consumers

Barriers to Achieving Sustainable Community Food Systems

- **Consumers**

- Lack of convenient, year round availability of local food products
- Preference for uniform, visually attractive food products
- Lack of willingness to pay more than 10% premium for local/ Organic products
- Low knowledge of sustainable food systems benefits
- Lack of buying power/ organized opposition to the existing power structures

Regional Food System Study

- Justification
 - What a regional food system study will tell us
 - How much food is produced locally
 - How much food is consumed locally
 - How much we are importing
 - How much of what we import could be grown/
processed locally