

**2003 Massachusetts Envirothon**  
**Current Issue Problem**  
**Strengthening Local Food Systems**

**Introduction**

In order to respond to this problem, your team will need to do some investigation. You will need to talk to a variety of people in your community and your foodshed, study print and web based resources, and make observations in the field.

If you do a thorough job and keep good records, you will not only score well but you will qualify for Mass Envirothon's Silver Award, which recognizes teams for their community investigations. For more information on the Silver Award, contact Nina Danforth ([nina.danforth@state.ma.us](mailto:nina.danforth@state.ma.us)) or Laura Muller ([lmuller@wheatonma.edu](mailto:lmuller@wheatonma.edu)).

Earlier this year your team received ten pages of "Questions and Resources for Team Preparation" to help you prepare for this problem. If you have further questions on how to prepare your presentation, contact Will Snyder at UMass Extension (413/545-3876 or [wsnyder@umext.umass.edu](mailto:wsnyder@umext.umass.edu)).

**The Problem**

Towns in your area are considering participating in the "Cities for Climate Protection" initiative (if you are interested, see <http://www.iclei.org/us/ccp/#ccpdescription>) and are looking for citizen input on ways to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Your team is fresh from an investigation of food production, processing, and distribution in your community. You have learned a lot about how strengthening the local food system can have a variety of significant benefits, including reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

Your team has volunteered to make a presentation that will introduce active citizens in your town to the advantages of strengthening the local food system. This is an opportunity to propose an actual, practical step that will move your community in the direction of agricultural sustainability and food security.

Keeping in mind that this "food system" idea is new to most people, you know that you will need to spend time introducing this concept in a way that they can easily understand. And keeping in mind that people are skeptical of new initiatives in the midst of local, state, and national budget cuts, you know that whatever step you recommend will have to be clear and specific and practical and do-able.

**Some Tips for Your Presentation**

Use a map to introduce your panel of judges to your community and to some of the important features of your local foodshed. In this problem, your "community" may extend well beyond your municipality.

"Food system" and "foodshed" and "ecological footprint" are new ideas to many people. So are "sustainable agriculture" and "food security." Take every opportunity to show the judges what you understand these terms to mean, both in theory and practice. Use diagrams and flow-charts, if appropriate to your explanations.

Show the judges *how* you know what you know. Tell them who you talked to, where you visited, what your information sources were and how you evaluated them.

You will have 15 minutes for your presentation, followed by a 10 minute question period.

## **In Your Presentation, You Should:**

### **Introduce your local foodshed and its key issues**

Introduce the geography of your area, particularly its current use for agriculture or suitability for agriculture - topography, water resources, soils, available open space, and development pressures.

Introduce the human community in terms of its current food infrastructure - farms and gardens, farm infrastructure, agricultural know-how and interest, food processing operations, how food is distributed, where food is sold, and how many people need to be fed.

### **Introduce the next step you are recommending your community take to strengthen the local food system.**

Describe specific actions to be taken and who will be involved in implementing them.

State how the action(s) will strengthen the food system: What key issue(s) are addressed and what outcome(s) do you hope will result? Include how you expect the action(s) will affect climate change.

Include general information about what you expect the costs will be and who will bear them.

### **Paint a "big picture" view of the effects of your proposed step.**

Note how your proposal will affect the local ecosystem and the natural resources and ecosystem services it provides (e.g. forests, wildlife, soils, water).

Note how your proposal will affect local people and the economy. Will there be winners and losers?

Suggest what steps toward a stronger local food system might become more feasible beyond this one.