

# COMMUNITY CONSUMPTION:

## *Is what you eat eating away at your community?*

Sprawling urban development, full of strip malls, chain stores, and parking lots, is paving over rural land across America and steadily ruining the strength and unique local character of rural and urban communities alike.

- Sprawl is accompanied by the degradation of the local natural environment. It reduces outdoor community spaces and recreational opportunities while increasing pollution in local waterways.
- Development from sprawl raises property taxes; forest and farm lands “more than pay for the municipal services they require, while taxes on residential uses consistently fail to cover costs” (*American Farmland Trust*, 2002).
- Sprawl decreases a community’s economic self-sufficiency when communities become dependent on distant companies for goods and services. These companies draw money out of the local economy and are hard to hold accountable for harmful business decisions.
- Suburban sprawl weakens the social fabric of a community by distancing consumers from their food and farmers.

This pattern of urban sprawl is worsened by industrial agricultural and corporate domination of the American food system. Now, due to unfair subsidies and practices in the agricultural sector, family farmers are increasingly unable to turn a profit in competition with corporate industrial farms, and are forced to sell their land to developers.

- According to the USDA’s National Resources Inventory, from 1992 to 1997 more than 11 million acres of rural land were converted to developed use and more than half of that conversion was agricultural land (*American Farmland Trust*, 2002; *USDA*, 2000).
- Today, more than 75% of our fruits and vegetables are produced near urban areas, directly in the path of relentless development (*American Farmland Trust*, 2002).

## *Buy local for better communities*

Buying local food benefits your whole community, from the local farmers to your family.

- Buying your food from local farmers will help keep their farms profitable, reducing the pressure to sell their land.
- Supporting local businesses will enable them to compete effectively with corporate franchises. Buying local will strengthen your community’s economic base and place your region’s future in the hands of those who care.
- Buying local food can connect community members to one another and develop local knowledge about food.

## *What can I do?*

- Start a Farm to College project at your college or university! Fight sprawl by convincing your food-service providers to purchase local food.
- Vote with your food dollar—*Buy Local Food!* Shop at a local farmers market, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm, or farm stand. Also encourage your local grocery stores and area restaurants to purchase more of their products from local farmers.
- Visit [www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org) for more tools, tips, and resources and to find a farmer or local food outlet near you.

