

Northern Berkshire Local Food and Farming Initiative!

Help the Berkshires Keep Farming!

The Berkshires are about to embark on a regional sustainability plan, led by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission through a HUD Sustainable Communities Planning Grant. In gearing up for this effort, individuals across the county have expressed a strong desire to see local agriculture and food—and the economic, community, and environmental values it represents—strongly represented.

The Berkshires have a long history of agriculture and are home to the first Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm in the country. This tradition has faced both new challenges and renewed support in recent years.

- Land values have risen in many areas of the county, pricing new farmers out of the industry;
- Development has continued to sprawl into agricultural lands, even as countywide population has decreased;
- The incidence of hunger and food insecurity has risen sharply due to the economic crisis and record high global food prices; and
- Climate change and an uncertain oil future highlight the sustainability of the current energy-intensive food system (farm to table).

Keep Farming!

In response to this strong community interest, BRPC has teamed with the Glynwood Keep Farming® Program which is designed to help communities understand how agriculture contributes to the local economy, community character, availability of fresh food and the environment. BRPC and Glynwood have committed to help interested communities across the region develop community-specific action plans to address the needs of local farmers and meet demands for local food, community gardening, CSAs, and more. This is a grassroots effort. Glynwood and BRPC will facilitate and support, but the work will be driven and completed by committees of community volunteers.

What are the expected outcomes of this process?

This process will have two main immediate outcomes:

1. **Community-Specific Action Plan:** At the end of the process, each community will have its own action plan with:
 - Fine grained data on the supply and demand of local food;
 - Farmer- and community-defined strategies to help support a robust food system; and
 - An action plan that provides guidance and coordination on how to implement strategies.
2. **Help Set Regional Policy:** Strategies identified by communities will help set the goals, policies, and strategies of the regional sustainability plan.



Some Benefits of Local Food and Agriculture

Economy: Farms and farm products contribute to our local economy as producers but also as consumers.

Energy and Climate: Local food travels shorter distances—using less energy for transportation and releasing less greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.

Visual Character: Local farms and gardens are a scenic and appealing part of the landscape.

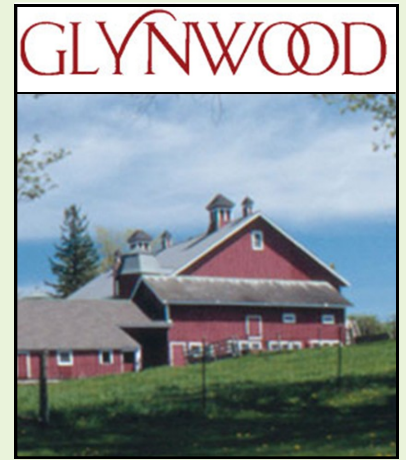
Sense of Community: Local food from CSAs, farmers markets, and community gardens allows you to know your farmers and interact with others in your community.

Nutrition and Food Accessibility: Local farms and community garden partnerships can help improve access to nutritious food through subsidies, education, and access to garden space.

About Glynwood (www.glynwood.org)

Glynwood is a not-for-profit organization located in the Hudson Valley. Glynwood's mission is to save farming by strengthening farm communities and regional food systems. Glynwood has extensive experience and expertise in working hands-on with communities to help them develop policies and infrastructure that support their farm economies and conserve their farmland.

Glynwood is located on a 225-acre diversified livestock and produce farm where innovate techniques that demonstrate the economic viability of sustainable farming practices are tested. The lessons learned from these practices are disseminated through hands-on workshops, seminars, and conferences.



What are the steps to getting a Keep Farming® initiative going in my community?

There is a three-step process that Glynwood and BRPC will help organize and facilitate:

1

Stakeholder Outreach Startup Meeting

Purpose: Meet with a small group of community members to help develop and implement an outreach strategy for Community Forum

Who Should Attend: Highly engaged stakeholders who are committed to seeing relevant issues of local food, agriculture, and food security addressed in their community

Format: BRPC and Glynwood will organize and facilitate a 1-2 hour small group meeting of identified stakeholders, no formal presentation

Get Ready...

2

Community Forum

Purpose: Present the Keep Farming® process, understand which communities are committed to moving forward, and form a committee to provide ongoing leadership

Who Should Attend: Community members and agency representatives interested in learning more about Keep Farming® to see if seems like a good fit for their community

Format: BRPC and Glynwood will organize and facilitate a 1-2 hour meeting with formal presentation and questions and answers, next steps

Get Set...

3

Keep Farming® Kickoff Meeting

Purpose: Organize community volunteers into committees to begin working!

Who Should Attend: Any community representative interested or wishing to support local farms, local food, and food security in their community

Format: BRPC and Glynwood will provide support and assistance to the community leadership committee who will organize a 2-hour meeting with formal presentation (committee, BRPC, Glynwood) and small group breakout sessions facilitated by leadership committee members

GO!

Contact us to learn more!

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