

## Shaping A Good Food Future for Madison

*Madison is a city surrounded by sustainable family farms and grappling with food justice issues. How it chooses to link these two issues has real impacts on community, economy and health, but receives little attention. There are many ways residents can help shape actions to improve the health of our community and our environment through good food. We highlight those actions here.*

When the clock strikes midnight on Jan. 1, 2020, REAP board member Nan Fey hopes to toast three food-focused accomplishments in the city from 2019:

- The inclusion of a food hub facility at the former Oscar Mayer site in Madison
- Revised policies on pesticide use on city-owned land, with an eye toward protecting pollinator populations
- New, lower water use rates for community gardens located on city-owned land

Fey will have a particularly good view on the progress of these goals, since she serves as chair of the Madison Food Policy Council, created in 2012 by Mayor Paul Soglin and the Madison Common Council. While the average Madison resident may not know the Madison Food Policy Council exists, it has made huge strides in its mission to develop city-level policies, programs and resources that support a sustainable local and regional food system.

Last year, the council granted nearly \$160,000 to help Luna's Groceries set up shop in the Allied-Dunn Marsh neighborhood, its first full-service grocery store in a decade.

The council successfully developed a process so residents can have gardens on street terraces and propose plantings on other city-owned lands that pro-



duce fruit, seeds and nuts available to the community.

Its 23 members accomplish this work through smaller working groups and task forces.

Last year was a big year for the council, Fey said, as it successfully advocated for including a number of food systems-related strategies into the city's 20-year comprehensive plan. These strategies touch on everything from land use and neighborhood access to economic development and sustainability.

"The strategy that will make the most difference overall is the commitment to develop a regional food system plan," Fey said.

### What to Watch for In 2019 (and Beyond)

The biggest "what to watch" item for 2019 in the local food system is the potential for the creation of a regional food hub in Madison. In December, the city budgeted \$100,000 for a feasibility study that is expected to be completed by the middle of this year. Initial focus is

on the former Oscar Mayer plant but other sites will be considered.

The long-awaited Madison Public Market is scheduled to move forward, though recent changes in location have pushed back its opening to 2021. That city-owned project will create more opportunities for residents to access local food in the city and its MarketReady program offers business training, mentorship and start-up capital for emerging food entrepreneurs. MarketReady prioritizes populations facing historic barriers to entrepreneurship including women, people of color, immigrants, low income populations, veterans, displaced workers, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

While the Madison Food Policy Council will follow the progress of these projects, it will have no shortage of its own work to do. This year, it will begin implementing healthy vending machine standards in city-owned buildings, look into establishing another urban agriculture district in the city, and revise pest management policies, among others.

It's not always fast work, Fey said, but with determination, it's work that will last.

"If you want a change to survive, you have to take the time to get it [implemented] at an institutional level."

### Your Involvement is Key

Nothing happens without people's support. Fortunately, Madison residents have opportunities early this year to shape the local food system.

**Vote.** On April 2, City of Madison residents will head to the polls to elect a new mayor, eight new city alders, and three new school board members (the primary is Feb. 19). As candidates share their views on the future of Madison, it's important to hear where they stand on

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the above food-related developments and food policy in general. The next Madison mayor will have a large say in where the city puts its resources and who it appoints to the Madison Food Policy Council.

**Learn who will champion good food access.** Wondering where the candidates stand on food, equity and sustainability issues? Start by reading their platforms. Attend a mayoral, aldermanic or school board forum and ask them. Take some time to listen to their vision for the city (*The Cap Times* podcast, “Madsplainers,” features each mayoral candidate and their vision for our city: [madison.com/ct/podcasts/](http://madison.com/ct/podcasts/)).

REAP will let you know when there are opportunities to hear from the candidates about their views on community

and regional food systems. Subscribe to our e-newsletter and follow us on Facebook to stay informed.

**Bring an issue to the Madison Food Policy Council.** To keep up with the work of the Madison Food Policy Council, visit [cityofmadison.com/food](http://cityofmadison.com/food). Meetings are open to the public and provide a public comment period. They also post all their minutes publicly.

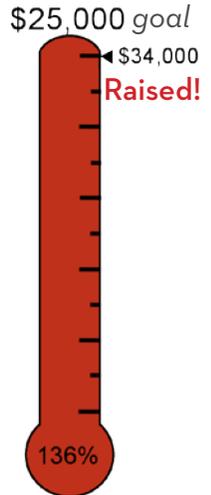
Interested in bringing a topic to the council? Fey has a suggestion. “If there’s something they want to push, start building up some momentum and then bring it up to the food policy council or to George [Reistad, City of Madison food policy director]. The more organized people can be about something like that, the more effective their efforts will be.”

## YOU DID IT!

We set a goal for our year-end appeal and you surpassed it with the largest year-end giving campaign in REAP’s 22-year history.

Thanks to each and every one of you (that’s 162 caring donors!), including REAP board members and major donors who put up a \$6,000 matching grant, **we raised \$34,000** in December to keep our work going strong.

These funds will be used to teach thousands of local kids about the power of good food and to build reliable markets for farmers and producers who grow food in ways that conserve land, water and energy. None of this work would be possible without the support of donors like you. **Thank you!**



## FROM THE DIRECTOR: *A new year in local food*



Welcome to a new year, REAP’s 22nd in existence.

Reading recent food and ag-related headlines has been sobering. We are facing another

farm crisis, evidenced by hundreds of farm closures in our state last year. Scientists have warned that climate change is affecting our oceans even faster than models predicted. Food recalls for pathogen contamination were widespread and deadly.

As we grapple with these tough and heartbreaking headlines, it reinforces the importance of REAP’s work and mission. Simply put, we believe that fostering local solutions and systems, and a sense that our mutual well-being is tied together as growers and eaters, is vital to solving some of these daunting problems.

So is your engagement in policy and elections. In Madison, we are getting ready to elect a new mayor and new school board members. At the state level, we are entering a budget year with a new administration who will hold listening sessions to hear what matters to Wisconsinites. This is the time to let elected officials know, with your voice and vote, that you care about creating

a food system that strengthens people, resources and our economy. For that reason, we’ve made our feature article of this *REAP Reporter* all about food policy, both local and statewide, to help focus on what initiatives can and should be supported (and featuring wise words from Madison Food Policy Council chair, and REAP Board Member, Nan Fey). You will see more of this in our communications going forward, as well as an emphasis on how you can get involved in building strong local food systems.

**A peek ahead for REAP in 2019:**

**New mission and vision:** REAP continues to evolve this year and there are some exciting changes ahead. This spring, we will reveal an updated mission and vision for REAP - one that reflects how we engage in the community to make positive change.

**Expanded programming and collaboration in the community:** We continue to deepen our work with the children in Madison who are most food insecure, and will grow efforts to collaborate with partner organizations to offer programming beyond the classroom and when school is out in the summer.

**More volunteer opportunities:** We heard loud and clear that our members love to engage with us and we couldn’t be more grateful. Look for opportuni-

ties to volunteer with our weekly fresh snack prep, in the classroom with our AmeriCorps service members, and right here in our offices.

Our annual fundraiser for Chef in the Classroom, the Dane County Farmers Market Breakfast, will not be held this year: DCFM is changing to a chef-in-residence program this winter instead. We will, however, plan a new food event to showcase these students and their skills in 2019. Our heartfelt thanks go to the longstanding organizers and supporters of the Dane County Farmers Market Breakfast, chefs Tory Miller and Lisa Jacobson.

Finally: our annual Burgers & Brew event will be only one day this year (mark your calendars for June 1!) and we’re back to three sliders so you can sample more of the amazing offerings.

I’m excited to roll up my sleeves and get to work. I hope you are too. Thanks for your support and your caring.

Sincerely,

Helen Sarakinos,  
Executive Director

# REAP'S PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT STATE BUDGET

As of January 2019, Wisconsin swears in a new governor and begins the process to develop and approve a new two-year state budget. With every new budget, the legislative Joint Finance Committee holds hearings throughout the state to hear what financial issues are on the minds of Wisconsinites. New leadership, and this budget process, present opportunities for farmers, eaters and buyers to let our elected leaders know that developing a strong food economy is good for all of us. REAP has identified some legislative and budget priorities that would strengthen efforts to grow, distribute and buy local and Wisconsin-grown food.

## Budget Priorities

Both Wisconsin's agricultural businesses and our children's health benefit from programs that support local food sales and access.

1) Fully fund the Farm to School position

and increase funding of Farm to School grant program in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP): The Farm to School program spurs more than \$9 million dollars in purchases of Wisconsin-grown and processed foods by Wisconsin schools each year, and for more than 500,000 students.

2) Increase funding of state Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant program: As of 2017, BLBW's modest \$1.2 million investment generated more than \$8.4 million in new food sales, made more than \$3.9 million in new investments, and created or retained hundreds of jobs. Demand for BLBW grants is high: DATCP turns away five projects for every one they fund.

## Legislative Priorities

1) Increase the state reimbursement for school lunches and expand reimbursement to school breakfasts: Currently,

Wisconsin reimburses school districts enrolled in the National School Lunch Program less than a nickel per meal - a rate unchanged since the 1980s. Raising reimbursement could incentivize purchase of Wisconsin-grown food.

2) Consider a pilot effort to reward schools and school districts for buying local: A pilot effort focused on federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program or Special Milk Program can allow the state to develop the most efficient way to scale up these incentives statewide.

## Big Picture

Create opportunities for broader food business innovation for Wisconsin farms: Use the Dairy Business Innovation Center model (matching producers with technical experts and DATCP administration) but with a broader food business innovation focus to broaden opportunities for Wisconsin family farms.

## APPLAUSE FOR OUR RECENT MAJOR DONORS

### The Evjue Foundation - \$20,000

The Evjue Foundation, the charitable arm of *The Cap Times*, has been a solid supporter of REAP's for many years and that generosity has allowed us to grow our impact in the community. We are honored to be a part of the investment of the Evjue Foundation in building a stronger, healthier community.

### Caritas Foundation - \$20,000

This family foundation supports efforts that improve the health and wellness of residents in Madison and Southern Wisconsin. We are thrilled for their ongoing support of REAP and our efforts to educate children about sustainability and nutrition, and transform school food.

### Madison Gas & Electric Foundation - \$15,000

Madison Gas & Electric Foundation awarded REAP a three-year, \$15,000 grant to support our food truck programming, and to engage older students in culinary skills and entrepreneurial opportunities around food.

### Roth Cheese - \$10,000

One of REAP's strongest corporate supporters, Roth Cheese has its roots in Monroe and its heart in Southern Wisconsin. They have championed our efforts to transform our regional food system for years. In

2017, Roth Cheese gifted REAP their fully equipped food truck, which last spring became Uproot by REAP, one of only a handful of Farm to School food trucks nationwide.

### Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation - \$10,000

Late 2018, the Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation honored REAP as an organization "aimed at building strong families and healthy kids." We are proud to be one of more than 80 organizations to receive funds from the foundation, which raises money during the American Family Insurance Championship PGA Tour golf tournament every June. This year's championship raised \$2,067,000 for non-profit organizations.

### Heartland Credit Union - \$8,800

Every year since 2002, REAP Food Group has published the Farm Fresh Atlas of Southern Wisconsin. This annual guide connects thousands of local consumers to local food through listings of Wisconsin farms, farmers' markets, restaurants and other businesses that sell local food and use sustainable production and business practices. For more than a decade, Heartland Credit Union has underwritten the annual printing of 30,000 copies of the Atlas.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Taste of Wisconsin Sale

Our annual holiday sale proved once again to be popular with local food lovers both inside Wisconsin and out. This fundraiser is our opportunity to support the schools that host our programs and Wisconsin's incredible local producers. Every dollar spent on the products and gift boxes in our sale stays in the local economy, supporting farmers and producers committed to crafting high-quality products while caring for the land.

Thank you to everyone who purchased from our Taste of Wisconsin holiday sale! Here's what happened because of you:

# 9,800

Products ordered from Wisconsin producers

# \$37,000

Paid to Wisconsin producers

# \$20,000

Raised for participating Madison schools

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REAP Food Group



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REAP FOOD GROUP

PRESENTS



# BURGERS AND BREW

The only way to kick off summer

SATURDAY JUNE 1

CAPITAL BREWERY / MIDDLETON

TICKETS GO ON SALE MARCH 14 - [REAPFOODGROUP.ORG](http://REAPFOODGROUP.ORG)

**REAP Food Group nourishes the links between land and table to grow a healthful, just, and sustainable local food system. You can support our mission by making a donation online at [reapfoodgroup.org/give](http://reapfoodgroup.org/give). Every annual donation above \$45 makes you a REAP member.**