

University of Minnesota partnership aims to increase capacity for local foods infrastructure development In South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota.

The first community meeting is scheduled October 8, 2011 at the Spearfish Recreation Center, 122 Recreation Lane, Spearfish, SD. The meeting will start at 10:00 am and will last 1 ½ to 2 hours. Everyone interested in local food and/or local economy is invited to participate.

SAINT PAUL, Minnesota—The University of Minnesota’s Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP), in partnership with North Dakota State University, Buy Fresh Buy Local South Dakota, and the Foundation for Agriculture and Rural Resources Management and Sustainability (FARRMS) are beginning a two-year project aimed at increasing the capacity of rural communities to bolster their local foods infrastructure.

The project, funded by a USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research Education grant will work with farmers, ranchers, food retailers, and local community leaders in three rural communities at various stages of food system development in [Bemidji, Minnesota](#), [Napoleon, North Dakota](#) and [Spearfish, South Dakota](#). Each community will identify barriers to establishing and advancing local food systems and work with researchers to develop toolkits that will provide resources to overcome those barriers.

RSDP works on projects directed by citizen led boards in five regions throughout outstate Minnesota. The partnerships focus on agriculture, natural resources, tourism, local foods and clean energy. Buy Fresh Buy Local South Dakota is a marketing and branding campaign focused on raising awareness of and promoting locally grown products. FARRMS is an organization that provides education, facilitation, and micro-credit to sustainable agriculture enterprises.

The ultimate intent of this project is to enhance the environment of rural communities, improve farmer livelihood, increase the health and well being of farmers and residents of rural communities, and to contribute to rural economic health through the support of diverse agricultural enterprises.

Strong local food systems contribute to local economies through high multiplier effects and promote rural population stability by providing additional opportunities for employment. Strong rural local food systems also enable residents to access to a variety of healthy produce, meats and dairy products that could otherwise be unavailable due to a lack of traditional infrastructure or external market shocks.

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