

HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACTS

16

full and part-time jobs created for local residents in just five years, 11 of which are held by people of color.

\$5 million

in sales of farm-fresh food since 2008, 25% of which has gone to institutions serving low-income communities and communities of color.

68% of staff and 75%

of board members are people of color.

150+

urban institutions, many of which serve low-income communities and communities of color, including schools, hospitals, senior centers, grocery stores, and community groups receive fresh, affordable, local food.



Santo and John Maccherone of Circle M Farms are fourth-generation farmers specializing in peaches, nectarines, apples, and asparagus on 150 acres in Salem County.

Profile: Common Market

Philadelphia, PA



As food access remains an issue facing communities across the nation, regional food hubs are emerging as a promising strategy to increase access to healthy foods while boosting local and regional economies. Since 2008, [Common Market](#) has been doing just that, connecting over 150 institutions around greater Philadelphia and southern New Jersey to farmers in rural Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

While Philadelphia lies near a vibrant agricultural region, the connection between rural growers and urban consumers has weakened over time, leaving many of the city's low-income, food insecure communities disconnected from this abundance of high-quality fresh foods. Many areas in the city are plagued by [poor health outcomes](#) and [economic hardships](#), as 41 percent of children in Philadelphia are overweight or obese, and 25 percent of the population lives in poverty. Though recent years have seen [encouraging reductions](#) in Philadelphia childhood obesity rates, there remains a great deal of work to be done. Black and Latino households are [more likely to report](#) traveling outside of their neighborhood to access a supermarket, yet without supermarkets nearby, families [often rely on corner stores](#) where the options are mostly unhealthy, processed and high in fat and sugar.

The Common Market food hub is addressing these exact issues, providing a centralized site for aggregating, distributing, and marketing produce and other food products for growers across the region. By combining food from over 70 farms at one site, Common Market is expanding access to urban markets for small family farmers and providing affordable, high-quality food to schools, senior centers, hospitals, churches, and community groups across Philadelphia and southern New Jersey. This diverse customer base reaches some of the most vulnerable communities, including a large food



retailer serving low-income Philadelphia consumers, as well as cafeteria services for over 30 public and charter schools in New Jersey.

In addition to providing healthy and safe food, Common Market also offers employment opportunities to local residents, hiring 16 full- and part-time workers to staff the food hub, and prioritizing local hires for contractors and vendors. By hiring from the local low-income community, Common Market is bolstering the area's workforce, and reinforcing their commitment to the communities they serve.

Philadelphia-area institutions and residents are not the only groups positively impacted by the food hub; the operation provides a great deal of support to regional farmers and food producers as well. For food sold through Common Market, farmers receive a higher percentage on the dollar compared to the profit made when working through traditional distribution channels. Working with institutions to increase procurement of locally grown food, Common Market is connecting regional farmers to some of the urban and suburban consumers that have historically struggled to access healthy food. By providing distribution and marketing support, they are building the capacity and increasing the viability of local family farms.

Common Market has proven that a food hub can be an economically promising enterprise, making it an even greater asset to local communities and regional farmers. Their mission is focused on improving access to high-quality food, particularly in low-income communities, and providing a viable alternative to mainstream food distribution networks for local farmers. The organization has recorded tremendous growth since 2008. From 2010 to 2012, sales more than doubled, increasing from \$574k to over \$1.3 million. Combined with the previous three years, Common Market has sold more than \$5 million in local, fresh food, 25 percent of which has been sold to institutions specifically serving low-income communities and communities of color.

The story of Common Market shows that regional food hubs can succeed both as economic drivers and value-based businesses. The organization is committed to serving diverse communities, with 68 percent of staff and 75 percent of the board representing people of color, highlighting their commitment to diversity internally, as well as to increased access to fresh food for all.

Common Market is increasing levels of transparency and accountability throughout the food supply chain, building food safety skills among farmers, hiring from the local community, and paying farmers fair prices for their products.

A more detailed profile of this organization will be available soon at www.policylink.org and www.commonmarketphila.org.



For more information about the Healthy Food Access Portal, contact us at info@healthyfoodaccess.org.