

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FARMERS AND EATERS COLLABORATE TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM FOR KINGSTON AREA

Care about your food? Wonder where it comes from? Are you concerned about the health of our community and environment?

Harvesting Support for Local Food: Success Stories from the Field will bring together farmers, eaters and local business people to learn what it takes to make a local food campaign successful. This event, open to everyone, takes place on **Saturday March 10, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.** in Davies Hall, St. Lawrence College, Kingston—100 Portsmouth Avenue.

The National Farmers Union (NFU) and Local Flavours are organizing this event which is being generously hosted by St. Lawrence College; it is the first in a four-part spring series. This first event launches **Food Down the Road: Toward a Sustainable Local Food System for Kingston and Countryside**, an ambitious long-term effort to develop markets which can support the farming, processing and distributing of locally grown food within a 100 km area around Kingston.

The featured speaker for March 10th is Mark Lattanzi, Campaign Director of the *Be a Local Hero, Buy Locally Grown* program in western Massachusetts—the longest running and most comprehensive “buy local” program for farm products in North America. Annually this program engages more than 120 farms, 12 restaurants, 45 grocery stores and 8 farmers’ markets to raise awareness and sales of locally grown farm products. Recently, two hospitals in this same region have committed to serving healthy, locally-sourced and sustainably-grown food in their facilities.

The event starts at 1:00 p.m. with “Building a Vibrant Local Food Campaign” (an interactive presentation for the general public), followed by “Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Local Businesses” at 3:30 p.m. Donations will be gratefully accepted. Tasty treats, featuring local ingredients, will be served.

Food Down the Road is an NFU Local 316 initiative that seeks to empower a broad range of local food system participants. We are looking down the road towards a sustainable Kingston and countryside—towards vibrant farms and healthy food for our urban and rural communities.

The NFU has been at the forefront of the local food movement in the Kingston region. Its activities have included organizing the Annual NFU *Feast of Fields* event and launching the *Eat from Kingston’s Countryside* local food logo campaign. “The **Food Down the Road** initiative is the next step in reaching out to our community,” says Andrea Cumpson, farmer and president of NFU Local 316, “We want to engage people at a deeper level, making connections between farmers and eaters in order to transform our food system.”

“A key to the success of **Food Down the Road** will be strong partnerships,” says David Hahn, farmer and NFU Local 316 director, “and we are delighted to be partnering with Local Flavours and St. Lawrence College to bring Lattanzi to Canada.” Local Flavours was founded in 2005 to promote the production and consumption of local food in the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve Area. St. Lawrence College’s involvement with this initiative is in keeping with its strong commitment to economic and environmental sustainability in our community.

Food Down the Road: Toward a Sustainable Local Food System for Kingston and Countryside is funded in part through contributions by the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario under the Agricultural Management Institute (AMI), an initiative of the federal-provincial-territorial Agricultural Policy Framework designed to position Canada’s agri-food sector as a world leader. The Agricultural Adaptation Council administers the AMI program on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario.

“The NFU is concerned that, while today’s agri-food model brings us affordable food from all corners of the planet and opens export markets for some farmers, it is not sustainable in its present form,” says Peter Dowling, farmer and NFU Local 316 director. He adds, “Canadian farmers face an income crisis, and people everywhere face an impending ecological crisis both of which have serious implications for our food system. Local food system development turns these challenges into an opportunity. Communities are responding with local farm and food initiatives around the globe—from Massachusetts to Havana, South Korea to Kingston.”

Cumpson concludes, “**Food Down the Road** is about inspiring hope, building commitment and sparking action toward a sustainable and just food system for our community.”

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