



## FARM ILLINOIS: A Food and Agriculture RoadMap for Illinois

**FARM Illinois mission:** *The objective of FARM Illinois is to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to enable Illinois and the Chicago region to become the leading global hub for food and agriculture system innovation and ensure their leadership in sustainably meeting the 21st-century challenge of global and local food security.*

- **A comprehensive, coordinated effort yielded an integrated and actionable strategic plan:** The FARM Illinois report is the first coordinated, systemwide effort in Illinois to bring together Illinois' food, agriculture, and business networks. Nine months and the involvement of more than 130 top experts and stakeholders in more than 20 committee meetings yielded a comprehensive and integrated strategic plan with actionable proposals to ensure sustained and innovative statewide leadership across the entire food and agriculture system.
- **Making Illinois a food and agriculture hub:** Illinois is located in the center of the Midwest, one of the world's most fertile and productive regions, and is home to Chicago, one of the world's top global cities and a hub for trade. FARM Illinois' plan outlines clear, actionable items to position the state as a regional, national, and global hub for food and agriculture activities and leader in addressing global and regional food insecurity.
- **FARM Illinois' plan was developed to bolster the state's economic, ecological, and social sustainability:** The food and agriculture sector already makes a huge economic impact in cities, towns, and counties across Illinois. Innovation, entrepreneurship, and research will help spur business growth and investment by making Illinois the preferred destination for food and agriculture companies of all sizes. A strong food and agriculture system provides jobs in both urban and rural areas, promotes social equity, fosters education about food, offers a foundation for current and future generations to build and live healthy lives, and helps meet future societal needs without compromising the health of ecosystems. Finally,
- **FARM Illinois is a roadmap for coordination to unleash Illinois' potential:** The Food and Agricultural Roadmap for Illinois outlines six key areas to support the development of a comprehensive and integrated strategic plan which ensures statewide, sustained innovative leadership in the broad and diverse food and agriculture sector: 1) Leadership for innovation, 2) Business development and entrepreneurship; 3) Workforce and education; 4) Resource management; 5) Infrastructure; and 6) Branding and market development.
  - **Leadership for innovation:** Develop an integrated, statewide, long-term, public-private strategy to increase coordination among agriculture and food system stakeholders, particularly between Chicago and statewide food and agriculture interests, and to maximize existing resources in the industry.
    - Establish the Illinois Council on Food and Agriculture to spearhead ongoing strategic development and implementation of FARM Illinois.
    - Host a Global Food and Agriculture Symposium starting in 2018 to establish Chicago and Illinois as global leaders in addressing 21<sup>st</sup>-century food and agriculture issues.



- **Business development and entrepreneurship:** Spur business growth and investment by making Illinois the preferred destination for food and agriculture companies of all sizes.
  - Develop a succession plan to retain talent and economic activity in farms and communities throughout the state.
  - Expand financing opportunities and information for farmers and entrepreneurs throughout the food and agriculture system.
  
- **Workforce and education:** Develop a high-quality workforce for food and agriculture and educate Illinois policy makers and the general public on sector innovation.
  - Build awareness of Illinois' food and agriculture system
  - Increase the emphasis on food and agriculture in primary and secondary education.
  - Establish a higher-education food and agriculture consortium to attract the best student talent and ensure they are aware of opportunities in the agriculture and food system post-graduation.
  
- **Resource management:** Ensure that Illinois is sustainably protecting and managing its natural resources.
  - Support existing efforts to encourage sustainable production, increase resilience to climate change, and reduce nutrient runoff.
  - Establish new farm protection programs to preserve farmland.
  
- **Infrastructure:** Ensure Illinois' infrastructure is capable of supporting the state's ability to sustainably meet its own needs while being a global leader in food and agriculture.
  - Modernize transportation infrastructure vital to agriculture and food distribution.
  - Enable every household and business in the state to connect to broadband service.
  
- **Branding and market development:** Develop larger and more diverse local, regional, national, and international markets for Illinois' agriculture and food products by raising Illinois' profile.
  - Raise Illinois' profile to boost domestic markets and increase exports for the full range of food and agriculture products.
  - Create an Illinois "brand," inclusive of the food and agriculture system, and implement a strategic marketing plan.