

# Mapping West Virginia's food economy

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By [Shauna Johnson](#) in [News](#) | January 28, 2014 at 12:28PM

**CHARLESTON, W.Va.** — Farmers, health advocates, state agency officials and other West Virginians have a plan for growing West Virginia's food economy.



On Tuesday, the different stakeholders came together in Charleston for a progress check on that plan during the "Road Map for the Food Economy" working conference, the third such event.

"There's such a huge demand for local food and, the more demand there is, the more interests there are from people for building

local food economies," said Elizabeth Spellman, executive director of the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition.

"We're really trying to take advantage of these opportunities to help farm businesses grow and to help people access local, healthy food."

Proponents of local food — food produced and distributed in geographically localized regions, instead of nationally or internationally — argue it tastes better, is more nutritious, preserves genetic diversity and promotes energy conservation while using less packaging, largely because the products do not have to be moved long distances.

The demand for local food has grown in recent years across the United States and in West Virginia. Spellman said the road map is about meeting that demand.

Described as a "food charter," the "Road Map for the Food Economy" is a statewide vision plan for helping build food businesses, created around West Virginia products, and measure the effects of state and local policies, programs and community efforts on that growth.

Spellman, a guest on Tuesday's MetroNews "Talkline," said coordination is key.

"We're working really hard **News | Sports** and collaboration, I think, in the food and farm sectors of the state," she said. "There are so many stakeholders out there, a lot of people interested in the hype around local food, but, really, what are we doing to help attract people and help them build viable food business?"



**Shauna Johnson**

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Shauna Johnson, a Fairmont native, is an award winning reporter who has been covering news in West Virginia for more than a decade.

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