



The various benefits of farm-to-table

METROCreative

Few things are more satisfying than biting into a fresh tomato right from the garden or seasoning a meal with herbs picked from a windowsill greenhouse. Restaurants recognize the value of such experiences, and more and more are relying on locally sourced products in their kitchens.

The farm-to-table movement is not new, but it has gained momentum as consumers become increasingly enamored with the flavor and environmental impact of locally sourced foods. The National Restaurant Association found that farm-to-table food was one of its top 10 trends for 2015. Furthermore, the group says that one in five consumers are willing to pay more for local food, and 41 percent admit that locally

sourced ingredients influence their decisions when choosing where to dine.

Newcomers to the farm-to-table dining experience may not understand all the fuss surrounding this popular trend. The following are some of the key benefits of farm-to-table.

- **Peak freshness and ripeness:** Local produce ripens on the plant and can be harvested at the last possible minute before it turns up on a plate. This helps ensure that it contains the highest amount of nutrients and flavor, according to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Food that has to travel further is often picked well before it is ready, ripening on the way to stores or other vendors.
- **Better for the environment:** Food that needn't travel far before reaching

diners' plates saves roughly 500 gallons of diesel fuel to haul produce a distance of 1,500 miles. This conserves fossil fuels and prevents harmful emissions from entering the atmosphere.

- **Supports neighboring farms:** Supporting farm-to-table restaurants and other eateries keeps business local in two different ways. It not only benefits local restaurants, but it also directly supports neighboring farms, fisheries and other suppliers.
- **Accessibility to seasonal choices:** Farm-to-table eating provides a wide variety of in-season foods. This can translate into tastier foods because they are grown and harvested during their optimal growing season.
- **Reduces factory farming:** According to O.info, the informational

resource powered by Overstock.com, farm-to-table and local farming can reduce reliance on large, profit-driven corporations that may focus on maximum production over animal health and welfare. Local farms may be more inclined to treat their animals well and institute sustainable practices.

- **Learn about the community:** A person might live in an area and never know that a local vineyard is in the vicinity or that a producer of straight-from-the-hive honey is nearby. Exploring farm-to-table resources can open people's eyes to local businesses doing great work in and around their communities.
- Farm-to-table is a popular movement that people are embracing for various reasons.

Professional Land Consultants

Land Brokerage | Farm Management
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Ray Brownfield loves working with people in agriculture.

With 55 years of experience in that field, he and his firm, Land Pro LLC, bring a variety of high quality services to the agricultural sector. Land Pro works with farm sales, farm auctions, investing in farmland and farm management.

Brownfield is the founder and owner of the firm. He grew up on a family farm in the Iroquois County town of Thawville and studied at Illinois State University.

After graduation he had a long and successful 40-year career in ag-related banking, management and real estate services. In 2003, at a time when many would have retired, he struck out on his own to start Land Pro LLC.

"I'm glad I did it," he says. "The people I work with are just outstanding."

Brownfield is an Accredited Land Consultant, an Accredited Farm Manager and a Licensed Real Estate Designated Managing Broker/Owner. The staff includes: Sandy Nehring, Licensed Real Estate Managing Broker; Chip Johnson, a Licensed Real Estate Managing Broker; Jason Lestina, Accredited Land Consultant, Accredited Farm Manager and Licensed Real Estate Broker; Pat Tomlinson, Certified Crop Adviser and Licensed Real Estate Broker; and Dave Oster, Licensed Real Estate Broker.

When it comes to selling farmland, Land Pro is often helping at a difficult time for families. Farm sales can occur when a farm is inherited. The next generation may not have a desire to farm. In the case of several members of a family inheriting shares of a farm, not everyone may want to continue to own the farm.

"Rather than arguing about it," Brownfield says, "a family often sells to avoid conflict. Everyone wants to get on with their lives."

The saleability of every farm, Brownfield says, is different. Soil quality plays a big part and that may be determined by nature over thousands of years. Over a shorter period of time, and under more control, is the drainage of the land and whether tile has been installed over the years to help that.

To help with the sale of the property, Land Pro has several services. They do a market analysis, which includes the history of crop yields of the last five years and the price of comparable land in the area. This is part of a multi-page

color booklet that includes an aerial photo, a topographical map, a map of the installed tile (when available) and a map of soil types.

There is no charge for this booklet. Land Pro also has high quality four foot by eight foot outdoor signs in the form of a V, far larger and more eye-catching than the small vinyl real estate signs you might be accustomed to seeing.

"We've sold quite a lot because of our signs," Brownfield says.

Land Pro also provides expert assistance with 1031 Tax Deferred Exchanges. This provision of the law allows persons selling farmland to mitigate capital gains taxes by investing the sale proceeds in any kind of income producing real estate. Land Pro specializes in that procedure, Brownfield says, by working with good attorneys and accountants.

"We help people," Brownfield says of their work on these transactions.

Land Pro also works with The Loranda Group on farm auctions. Through experience, Land Pro knows which areas are more conducive to an auction. Auctions work in some communities, bringing a better price for the seller, but in other areas that may not be the case.

"The key to a good auction is competition," Brownfield says. Auctions are also "as is where is." In some areas, the land is separated from the homestead or the buildings are divided from the land.

Land Pro's farm management service works, in part, because their staff includes experienced farm professionals. They can step in when someone is tired of handling their lease. They currently have more than 13,000 acres under management now.

Land Pro will interview the tenants and work to preserve the soil. They will prepare a budget and an annual report. They can do the bookkeeping, complete with real estate taxes and insurance. They will maintain a high level of communication, visiting farms three to four times a year or more if necessary.

They will get a fair rent price for the owner, Brownfield says, but "at the end of the day, it is the owner's farm." We will work for them.

To contact Land Pro: landprollc.us is their website. 331-999-3490 is their phone.