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New FARM Illinois Plan Outlines Strategies to make Illinois and Chicago Global Hub for Food and Agriculture by 2025

“FARM Illinois is the first coordinated, systemwide effort to bring together Illinois’ food, agriculture, and business networks.”

CHICAGO (May 19, 2015) – A new plan shows Illinois and Chicago have the potential to be a regional, national, and global hub for food and agriculture innovation and addressing global and local food insecurity. The Food and Agriculture RoadMap for Illinois (FARM Illinois), released today, outlines strategic recommendations that will set the national and international standard for how the food and agriculture system can improve health, contribute to the economy, create jobs, employ new technologies, preserve the environment, adapt to a changing climate, and help underserved communities. Lead funding for the initiative was provided by the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust, in collaboration with the Illinois Farm Bureau and with additional financial support from organizations and businesses around the state.

“FARM Illinois is the first coordinated, systemwide effort to bring together Illinois’ food, agriculture, and business networks,” said Dr. Robert Easter, president emeritus of University of Illinois and chairman of the FARM Illinois Leadership Council. “The FARM Illinois plan lays out a comprehensive set of recommendations that will position Illinois and Chicago as the epicenter of the global, national, regional, and local food and agriculture systems for generations to come.”

Among other recommendations, FARM Illinois calls for the establishment of the Illinois Council for Food and Agriculture to spearhead ongoing strategic development and implementation of FARM Illinois in the future. The council will develop performance measures to track and evaluate progress. An annual report will demonstrate achievements as well as indicate where additional effort is needed, ensuring the plan remains updated, vital, and relevant.

Since September 2014, more than 150 stakeholders and experts representing different aspects of the food and agriculture system—from policy to advocacy, research to industry, and production to consumption—contributed to a rigorous analysis of the region’s strengths and weaknesses and developed 23 strategic recommendations in 6 key areas:

- **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 maximize existing resources in the industry.
- **Business development and entrepreneurship:** Spur business growth and investment by making Illinois the preferred destination for food and agriculture companies of all sizes.

- **Workforce and education:** Develop a high-quality workforce for food and agriculture and educate Illinois policy makers and the general public on sector innovation.
- **Resource management:** Ensure Illinois sustainably protects and manages its natural resources.
- **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.
- **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.

"FARM Illinois leverages the state's considerable assets in an effort to secure and strengthen its food and agriculture sector for the future," said Terry Mazany, president and CEO of The Chicago Community Trust and advisor to FARM Illinois. "By making the food and agriculture sector a priority, we will ensure Illinois remains competitive in the global marketplace, nurtures its local and regional food and agriculture systems, and preserves a proud and industrious heritage. Even more important, Illinois can and must play a key role to meet the food and nutrition needs of a global population growing to 9 billion or more by midcentury. The FARM Illinois plan provides the tools to make that happen."

The food and agriculture system brings together the strengths of the state - 75.8 percent of which is farmland - with the resources of Chicago as a global city to enable Illinois to be a uniquely strong player in the space, from production through consumption. The sector constitutes 1 of every 17 jobs and, according to a report released earlier this year by Decision Innovation Solutions, the sector accounts for nearly 10 percent of the state's economic output, totaling \$120.9 billion in 2012.

"Agriculture is a major driver in Illinois' economy today and can play an even bigger role in turning the state's economy around. I thank the FARM Illinois Leadership Council and many participants for their expertise and insight," said Philip Nelson, director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

"Illinois, the United States, and the world face significant challenges, and there are tremendous opportunities for Illinois' agriculture as global population and incomes rise," said Richard Guebert Jr., president of the Illinois Farm Bureau and a member of the FARM Illinois Leadership Council. "FARM Illinois provides a roadmap to strengthen the agriculture and food sector, create jobs, and solidify Illinois' position in the global agriculture and food marketplace for decades."

Central to the FARM Illinois plan is the core principle that 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.

"FARM Illinois is unprecedented in its collaboration and in laying out recommendations that will spur innovation and job creation in Illinois' food and agriculture sector," said Jim Schultz, director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

The plan emphasizes how 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 environment.

"The Searle family has a strong commitment to promoting conservation and economic development through local food systems," said Renee Michaels, the vice president of Kinship Foundation, a private operating foundation established to support the Searle family's institutional philanthropy. "The FARM

Illinois plan represents a new vision and approach for food production in Illinois that starts with this plan, but will continue for decades to come.”

An executive copy of the full FARM Illinois plan is attached. The full plan can be found at www.farmillinois.org.

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About FARM Illinois: *The Food and Agriculture RoadMap for Illinois (FARM Illinois) was established 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.*

Lead funding for FARM Illinois was provided by the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust. Additional funding support was provided by 1st Farm Credit Services, Archer Daniels Midland Company, CME Group, Farm Credit Illinois, Fresh Taste, GROWMARK, Inc., Illinois Biotechnology Industry Organization—iBIO®, Illinois Corn Marketing Board, Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Soybean Association, Ingredion, Renew Moline, Inc., and United Airlines.

The development of the plan was directed by Lori Healey, then-chief executive officer of Tur Partners, and is managed by Tyler Strom, former fellow for global agriculture and food, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Leland Strom, former chairman and chief executive officer of the Farm Credit Administration, currently serves as director.