

Land and Farming

Information from MCE's 2014 St. Louis Regional Food Study



In the St. Louis region, we're fortunate to have high quality land and soil for farming. However, industrialized practices, urban development, and excessive chemicals and pesticides are harming our land and threatening our local food future.

- Approximately 64 percent of the total land area of the St. Louis region is "land in farms" which includes cropland, pastureland, woodland, and farmsteads.
- The number of farms in our region is decreasing over time, but the average farm size is increasing as industrial operations dominate local agriculture.
- Specialization and mechanization in farming have led to us producing less fruits and vegetables than ever before. For instance, over the last century, the number of counties producing potatoes has shrunk by 35 percent and the number of counties producing pears has decreased by 42 percent.
- Conversely, we're growing more food for processing and livestock feed than ever before. In fact, 94 percent of the region's total cropland produced "Food System" crops such as wheat, soybeans, and corn.
- Industrialized farming practices often rely on chemical and pesticide treatments and utilize excessive amounts of manure or chemical fertilizer. These practices have impacted the quality of our soil and the health of our farmland.
- Despite the continued presence of industrialized agriculture, local farmers and food producers are making a difference in our region. The St. Louis area has over 1,200 vegetable farming operations. 37 counties also have organic crop farming, taking place on roughly 3,000 acres in the region.

Consult moenviron.org for citations and the complete STL Regional Food Study

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How Do We Improve?

A Growing Knowledge

We can learn more about our soil and land types to tailor farming or gardening practices to the specific needs and capability of the land. The implementation of cover crops and crop rotation will help subsequently preserve long-term soil health in our region.

Testing 1,2,3

As a Foodshed, we can increase efforts to expand urban agriculture. But before growing, it's essential to conduct soil testing on urban land to determine if the areas are suitable for food production.

Go Organic

The residents of our region can show support for organic farming at their nearest farmer's market and advocate for financial incentives to help small fruit and vegetable farmers in the Foodshed.