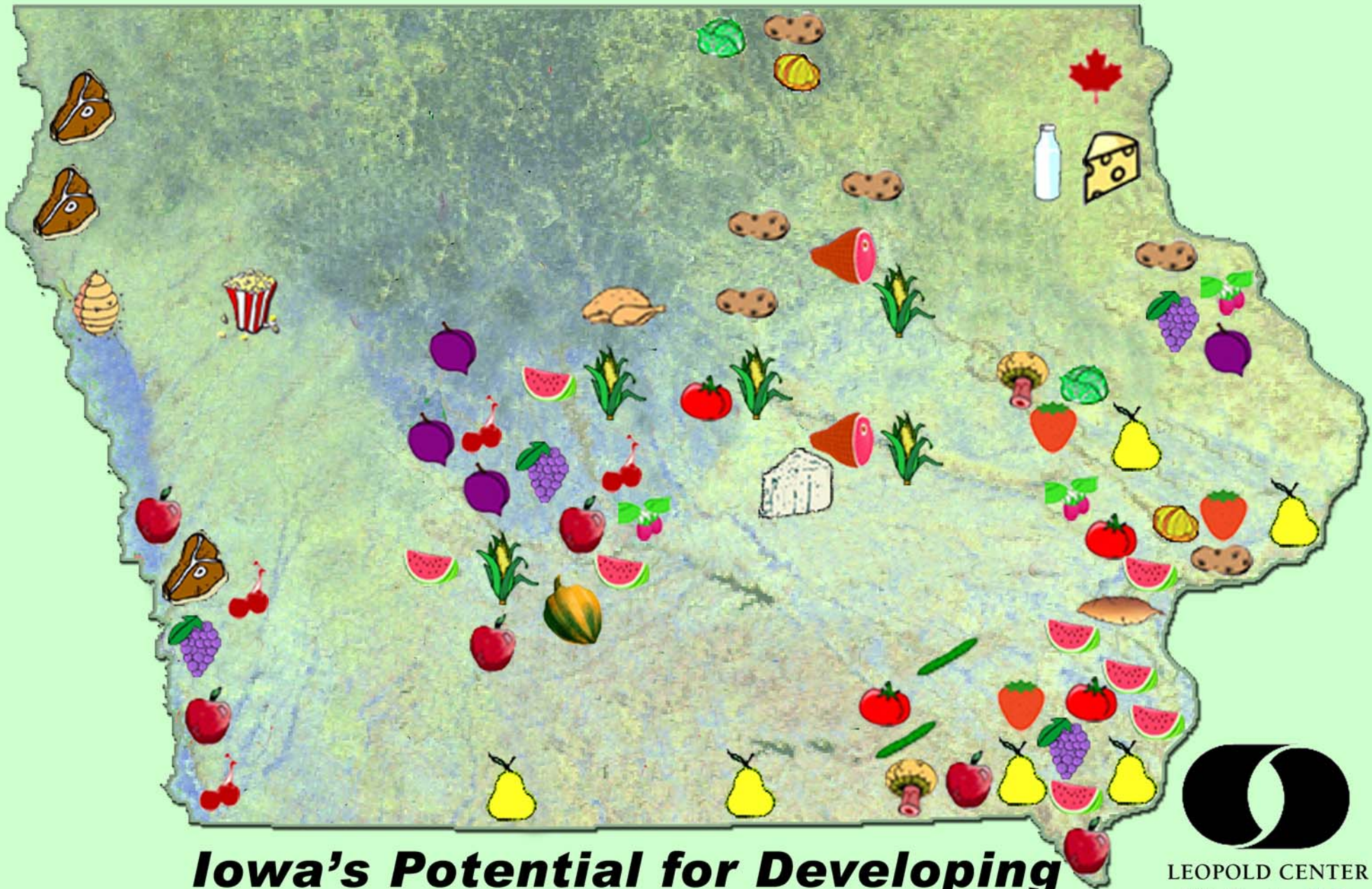


A Geography of Taste



Iowa's Potential for Developing Place-based and Traditional Foods

A project of the Leopold Center's Marketing and Food Systems Initiative



LEOPOLD CENTER
209 Curtiss Hall
Ames, IA 50011
515.294.1854
rspirog@iastate.edu

Acknowledgements

Authors

Rich Pirog -- Marketing and Food Systems Initiative Program Leader, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Zach Paskiet -- ISU College of Business undergraduate and Leopold Center student intern

Special thanks

The authors wish to thank the following people:

Andrew Hug -- reviewer, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Roxanne Clemens -- reviewer, Midwest Agribusiness Trade Research and Information Center, ISU

Sue Futrell -- reviewer, One Backyard, Food Marketing consultant

Duncan Hilchey, Cornell University, for sharing information and providing text on place-based food opportunities in New York state.

Mary Adams -- technical editor, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Laura Miller -- Web publishing, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Ruth Book -- copy editor, layout and design, *Information Development~Expanding Awareness (IDEA)*.

Contact

Rich Pirog

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Iowa State University

rspirog@iastate.edu

515.294.1854

Fax 515.294.9696

Full report available on the Web at: www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/files/taste.pdf



This publication was produced by *IDEA: Information Development ~ Expanding Awareness*. *IDEA* is a communication service for land-grant institutions and their partners. *IDEA* staff manages the development of written, visual and electronic information to describe impacts of educational or research programs. *IDEA* is affiliated with Iowa State University Extension under Continuing Education and Communication Services (CECS). www.idea@iastate.edu. 515.294.8802

Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. Vietnam Era veteran. Any persons having inquires concerning this may contact the Director of Affirmative Action, 1350 Beardshear Hall, 515.294.7612.

Copyright 2004 Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
European and U.S. Marketplaces	10
Iowa's Food Heritage	14
Cultural Influences	16
Iowa Place-based Foods	20
Conclusion	44
Recommendations for Action	45



Executive Summary

In the past 15 years there has been significant movement in most of the world's industrialized nations towards offering more highly differentiated foods in the marketplace. These highly differentiated products—often referred to as niche market products—consist of food and fiber channeled from farmers directly to consumers or provided to consumers from farmers who participate in a value chain where some other entity does the marketing.

Niche markets eventually may evolve in a manner that is counterproductive for the participating farmers and farmer groups. As more producers enter the niche, more product becomes available in the market, which tends to lower price premiums. In order to compensate for the reduction in premiums, farmers and farmer groups may resort to increasing the number of acres or animals in production to raise sales volume. This leads to even more product in the market which further lowers the price. If this trend continues, the niche can become commodified (turned into or treated as a commodity) and the most innovative and entrepreneurial farmers in the niche will either focus on adding more value to the niche product or move on to another niche.

Clearly, there is a need for models that avoid commodifying niche markets for highly differentiated food products. One way to reduce this risk is to limit production to certain geographic areas that are best suited (ecologically and/or traditionally) for production and build brand identity and reputation based on quality for those products. Theoretically, if farmers control the amount and the quality of the product that enters the market, they can better maintain premiums and lower the risk of commodifying the product.

Objectives

This paper will:

- ◆ Provide a brief overview of how several place-based and traditional food products function in the European and U.S. marketplaces, and how those products provide premiums to farmers;
- ◆ Explore Iowa's historical, ecological, cultural, and economic potential for developing place-based and traditional food products; and
- ◆ Make recommendations for action to research and further explore this opportunity.

Today, many European Union (EU) countries market highly differentiated, quality assured foods based on historical, cultural, social, climactic, and ecological factors that make the products unique. The EU documents and protects these food products through the use of geographic indications (GIs). GIs are signs that identify a product or good as originating in a region or locality where its quality, reputation, or other characteristics are clearly attributable to its geographic origin. The development of GIs in the European Union highlights a move away from a commodity-based agriculture toward a quality-based system with highly differentiated products that take advantage of the ecology and tradition of the specific region. GIs offer European consumers high-quality products with a unique story, and offer farmers an alternative to expansion as the only avenue to remain profitable through farming.

In the United States, GIs are protected as certification marks. Certification marks are a type of trademark that can certify geographical origin, type of materials used, quality, manufacturing/processing method, and products made by members of a specific organization (such as a labor union). The American Viticultural Area (AVA) is another type of place-based certification mark in use



Executive Summary

in the United States. An American Viticultural Area is a grape-growing region distinguishable by geographic features whose boundaries are defined by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau of the U.S. Government. At least 85 percent of the grapes used to make the wine must be grown within the established AVA geographic boundaries in order for the AVA to be referenced on the label.

Iowa has a unique food history that has been heavily influenced by the state's ecology and the culture and traditions of its inhabitants. The U.S. urban and suburban perception of Iowa as a farm state offers a competitive advantage in the development of place-based food brands, agritourism, and heritage tourism. The Delicious apple, Muscatine melon, Maytag Blue Cheese, and region-characteristic wines are all examples of place-based foods that, with appropriate market-based incentives and state investment, may provide increased economic benefit for Iowa farmers, processors, and rural communities.

Although American and Iowa consumers value local foods, it is unclear which traits of place-based foods they value most highly, and how they would perceive such foods among the confusing array of other differentiated foods already available in the market. In addition to the uncertainty of consumer interest and acceptance of place-based foods, there are policy and market challenges that may hinder the development of place-based foods in the U.S. food system.

This paper *is not* a call for Iowa to return to its earlier agricultural heritage by competing with other states in producing an array of commodity-type foodstuffs when some other states clearly have the competitive advantage for such products. Rather, the study of the integration of Iowa's food history, ecology, and culture can teach

valuable lessons about what is unique and different in Iowa, and perhaps shed some light on how to capitalize on those differences in the marketplace through a focus on highly differentiated place-based foods linked to agritourism and economic development.

Iowa's diverse food history and cultural traditions need further investigation in order to determine the state's potential to market place-based foods. Other states such as New York and Missouri see the combination of place-based foods and agritourism as an important ingredient in the recipe for economic development in rural communities. Given its national perception as a rural agricultural state and a leader in alternative/sustainable agriculture, Iowa needs to explore this opportunity further as an option to increase economic development for its rural communities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to further explore the potential of place-based foods in Iowa:

- ◆ Research and document Iowa's food production history of unique and highly differentiated food products, including food folklore and traditions.
- ◆ Use maps of Iowa's soils, geology, land cover, and food history to develop a detailed map that would integrate Iowa's distinct ecological regions with its geographic food history.
- ◆ Conduct (or gather existing) case studies on the economic costs and benefits of U.S. food products that have certification marks.
- ◆ Conduct consumer-based market research on which geographic-based traits are most likely to appeal to Iowa and Midwestern consumers.

(continued on next page)



Executive Summary

- ◆ Research the link between place-based foods and agritourism and how the two can function symbiotically to increase economic development of Iowa's rural communities.
- ◆ Invite personnel from several regional and heritage food projects in the United States to visit Iowa and share information about how they developed and implemented their work.
- ◆ Encourage the Iowa grape and wine industry to discuss how best to develop AVAs within the state and in collaboration with neighboring states.
- ◆ Research and develop strategies to overcome the policy-related challenges to encourage production of place-based foods in Iowa, the Upper Midwest, and the United States.
- ◆ Based on research described above, the state of Iowa should allocate funds to develop an appropriate place-based foods program linked to agritourism and economic development that will support Iowa's farmers and rural communities.



Introduction

Background

Iowa's agricultural landscape has not always been dominated by corn and soybeans. Less than eighty years ago it was a highly diverse vista with more than 20 different crop and livestock enterprises found on at least 10 percent of its farms (Table 1). After World War II, the introduction of new technologies—fertilizers and pesticides—along with federal and state government incentives transformed Iowa into a commodity agriculture state with primary production in corn, soybeans, cattle, hogs, and, more recently, eggs. Today the only enterprises that can be found on more than 25 percent of Iowa's farms are corn and soybeans. In recent years, profit margins have diminished for commodity farmers. Adding value to existing crop and livestock enterprises has become an important strategy for Iowa farmers hoping to remain competitive. In order for producers to profit from this strategy they often perceive the need to be able to own or directly influence other portions of the value chain.¹

Local food systems

Local food systems, where farmers sell food products directly to consumers, chefs, and food service managers, have been an important way for farmers to have more control over the price they receive for their products. Many of these direct market farmers focus all of their farm enterprises on direct consumer linkages. Selling directly to consumers has proved particularly attractive to those farmers who have other sources of income such as off-farm employment and do not have commodity crop or livestock enterprises.

¹ A value chain is defined as a network of partners who collaborate to respond to market demand for a particular product or service.

Some farmers use direct market systems in tandem with other non-direct to consumer enterprises where some other entity markets the product for them. For example, some participate in highly differentiated value chains such as organic dairy or niche pork. The farmers participating in these unique value chains frequently receive a premium for producing a highly differentiated food product, yet that premium often is not as high as it would be if they direct-marketed the product. There are economic and quality of life considerations and trade-offs between direct marketing differentiated food products and participating in a chain where someone else does the marketing.

Niche markets

Niche markets for food and fiber—whether they are channeled through direct markets or participation in a value chain—may evolve in a manner that is eventually counterproductive for the participating farmers and farmer groups. As more producers enter the niche, more product becomes available in the market, which tends to lower price premiums. In order to compensate for the reduction in premium, farmers and farmer groups may resort to increasing the number of acres or animals in production to raise sales volume. This leads to even more product in the market which further lowers the price. If this trend continues, the niche can become “commodified” (turned into or treated as a commodity) and the most innovative and entrepreneurial farmers in the niche either focus on adding more value to the niche product or move on to another niche.



Introduction

Table 1. Number of commodities produced for sale on at least 1 percent of all Iowa farms for selected years from 1920 to 1997.

1920	(%)	1935	(%)	1945	(%)	1954	(%)	1964	(%)	1978	(%)	1987	(%)	1997	(%)
Horses	(95)	Cattle	(94)	Cattle	(92)	Corn	(91)	Corn	(87)	Corn	(90)	Corn	(79)	Corn	(68)
Cattle	(95)	Horse	(93)	Chicken	(91)	Cattle	(89)	Cattle	(81)	Soybeans	(68)	Soybeans	(65)	Soybeans	(62)
Chicken	(95)	Chicken	(93)	Corn	(91)	Oats	(83)	Hogs	(69)	Cattle	(60)	Cattle	(47)	Hay	(42)
Corn	(94)	Corn	(90)	Horses	(84)	Chicken	(82)	Hay	(62)	Hay	(56)	Hay	(46)	Cattle	(42)
Hogs	(89)	Hogs	(83)	Hogs	(81)	Hogs	(79)	Soybeans	(57)	Hogs	(50)	Hogs	(35)	Hogs	(19)
Apples	(84)	Hay	(82)	Hay	(80)	Hay	(72)	Oats	(57)	Oats	(34)	Oats	(25)	Oats	(12)
Hay	(82)	Potatoes	(64)	Oats	(74)	Horses	(42)	Chicken	(48)	Horses	(13)	Horses	(10)	Horses	(11)
Oats	(81)	Apples	(56)	Apples	(41)	Soybeans	(37)	Horses	(26)	Chicken	(09)	Sheep	(08)	Sheep	(04)
Potatoes	(62)	Oats	(52)	Soybeans	(40)	Potatoes	(18)	Sheep	(17)	Sheep	(08)	Chicken	(05)	Chicken	(02)
Cherries	(57)	Cherries	(24)	Grapes	(23)	Sheep	(16)	Potatoes	(06)	Wheat	(01)	Ducks	(01)	Goats	(01)
Wheat	(36)	Grapes	(28)	Potatoes	(23)	Ducks	(05)	Wheat	(03)	Goats	(01)	Goats	(01)		
Plums	(29)	Plums	(28)	Cherries	(20)	Apples	(05)	Sorghum	(02)	Ducks	(01)	Wheat	(01)		
Grapes	(28)	Sheep	(21)	Peaches	(16)	Cherries	(04)	Red clover	(02)						
Ducks	(18)	Peaches	(16)	Sheep	(16)	Peaches	(04)	Apples	(02)						
Geese	(18)	Pears	(16)	Plums	(15)	Goats	(04)	Ducks	(02)						
Strawberry	(17)	Mules	(13)	Pears	(13)	Grapes	(03)	Goats	(02)						
Pears	(17)	Ducks	(12)	Rd clover	(10)	Pears	(03)	Geese	(01)						
Mules	(14)	Wheat	(12)	Mules	(06)	Plums	(03)								
Sheep	(14)	Geese	(11)	Strwberry	(06)	Wheat	(03)								
Timothy	(10)	Sorghum	(09)	Ducks	(06)	Red clover	(03)								
Peaches	(09)	Barley	(09)	Wheat	(04)	Geese	(03)								
Bees	(09)	Red clover	(09)	Timothy	(04)	Popcorn	(02)								
Barley	(09)	Strawberry	(08)	Geese	(03)	Timothy	(02)								
Raspberry	(07)	Soybeans	(08)	Rye	(02)	Swt potato	(02)								
Turkeys	(07)	Raspberry	(06)	Popcorn	(02)	Swt corn	(01)								
Wt.melon	(06)	Bees	(05)	Swt corn	(02)	Turkeys	(01)								
Syrup Sorg	(06)	Timothy	(05)	Raspberry	(02)										
Gooseberry	(03)	Turkeys	(04)	Bees	(02)										
Sweet corn	(02)	Rye	(02)	Sorghum	(01)										
Apricots	(02)	Popcorn	(02)												
Tomatoes	(02)	Sweet corn	(02)												
Cabbage	(01)	Swt clover	(01)												
Popcorn	(01)	Goats	(01)												
Currants	(01)														
n= 34		n=33		n=29		n=26		n=17		n=12		n=12		n=10	

Prepared by Michael Carolan, Sociology Department, Iowa State University. Data is from U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Introduction

Geographic markets

One way that farmers may be able to avoid “commodifying” niche markets for highly differentiated food products is to limit production to certain geographic areas that are best suited, ecologically and/or traditionally, for production and build brand identity and reputation based on quality. Theoretically, if farmers control the amount and the quality of the product that enters the market, they can better maintain premiums and lower the risk of “commodifying” the product.

Objectives

This paper will:

- ◆ Provide a brief overview of how several place-based and traditional food products function in the European and U.S. marketplaces, and how those products provide premiums to farmers;
- ◆ Explore Iowa’s historical, ecological, cultural, and economic potential for developing place-based and traditional food products; and
- ◆ Make recommendations for action to research and further explore this opportunity.



European and U.S. Marketplaces

Food products with geographic indications in the European Union

For centuries, residents of many European countries have enjoyed food products linked to the culture and tradition of a particular region. Today, many European Union (EU) countries market highly differentiated, quality assured foods based on historical, cultural, social, climactic, and ecological factors that make the products unique.

The EU documents and protects these food products through the use of geographic indications (GIs). GIs are signs that identify a product or good as originating in a region or locality where its quality, reputation, or other characteristics are clearly attributable to its geographic origin. Local factors—inherent to a region—that may influence the quality and taste of the food product include climate, soils, and water.

The European Union uses geographic indications to develop and protect foodstuffs for three reasons:²

1. To encourage diverse agricultural production,
2. To protect product names from misuse and imitation, and
3. To help consumers by giving them information concerning the specific character of the products.

European Union Countries (as of 8-04): Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Turkey.

² As reported on the Europa– Gateway to the European Union Agriculture and Food web site. Visited August 2004.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/foodqual/quali1_en.htm

In 1992, the European Union created three systems to promote and protect food products. These categories are known as PDO (Protected Designation of Origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) and TSG (Traditional Specialty Guaranteed). PDO product foodstuffs must be produced, processed, and prepared in a given geographical area using recognized know how.³

PDO (Protected Designation of Origin)



PGI (Protected Geographical Indication)



³ As defined on the Europa – Gateway to the European Union Agriculture and Food web site. Visited August 2004.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/foodqual/quali1_en.htm

European and U.S. Marketplaces

Parmigiano Reggiano cheese from Italy is an example of a PDO product. Parmigiano Reggiano cheese certification indicates that the product originates in the zone encompassing the provinces of Parma, Reggio Emilia, Modena, and Mantua on the right bank of the Po River, and Bologna on the left bank of the Reno River.

To receive a PGI product designation, a geographical link must occur in at least one of the stages of production, processing, or preparation.⁴ An example is Radicchio Rosso di Treviso grown in the Veneto Region of Italy (Figure 1). Radicchio is a type of red chicory. The renown of red Treviso chicory is related to the locations where it was traditionally grown in the Veneto, including the town districts of Treviso, Padua, and Venice.

TSG (Traditional Speciality Guaranteed)



The TSG system highlights the traditional character of a foodstuff, either in composition or means of production.⁵ Examples include traditional-type mozzarella cheese in Italy and Sweden's Hushållsost cheese, a semi-hard cheese made from cow's milk.

Figure 1. Radicchio Rosso di Treviso grown in the Veneto Region of Italy



⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.



European and U.S. Marketplaces

The role of GIs in the EU marketplace

Because the GIs are highly differentiated products, they do not compete in the same markets as commodity foods. Since GIs are understood by European consumers to denote the origin and quality of the products, false use of GIs is believed to be detrimental to consumers and farmers who produce these products.

The potential damage to farmers and food business include loss of product sales and weakening of the established reputation of the food product. All other EU countries are required to prevent use that suggests a product originates in a geographical area other than the true designated origin and misleads the public or creates unfair competition. GIs in the EU provide price premiums that reach back through the value chain to the farmers. Farmer networks, often referred to as consortia, significantly influence the setting of prices for these products. These farmers also decide, based on demand and other factors, how much of the product they will grow or raise.

Controversies have risen over GIs when the product name in one region and country may have a common usage in another. For example, products such as Parmesan and Feta cheese may be viewed by some as having achieved a common or generic status in the marketplace. There also have been abuses of GI names by trademarking.

Certification marks in the United States

In the United States, GIs are protected as certification marks. Certification marks are a type of trademark that can certify geographical origin, type of materials used, quality, manufacturing/processing method, and products made by members of a specific organization, such as a labor union.

One example of a place-based food product with a certification mark is the Vidalia onion. These onions have been raised for many years in Georgia and are known for their mild, sweet flavor. The onions became so popular that their reputation spread throughout the United States. Alarmed that onions grown outside of Georgia were being marketed as Vidalia onions, a group of farmers and the Georgia Department of Agriculture took action. In 1986 the Georgia legislature granted Vidalia onions legal status through the Vidalia Onion Trademark Act.⁶ In 1989 these Vidalia onion growers were granted a federal marketing order through U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service to help address marketing issues for the onions.⁷

Currently hybrid yellow Granex-type onions are grown in a 19 county area in Georgia and marketed as Vidalia onions. Onions grown outside of this area are not allowed to use the name Vidalia. The certification mark for Vidalia onions is owned by Georgia's Department of Agriculture. Certification marks are often owned by state agencies or non-commercial organizations. A recent case

⁶ Clemens, Roxanne. 2002. "Why Can't Vidalia Onions Be Grown In Iowa? Developing a Branded Agricultural Product." MATRIC Briefing Paper 02-MBP 3. Midwest Agribusiness Trade Research and Information Center, Iowa State University.

⁷ Ibid.

European and U.S. Marketplaces

study of the Vidalia onion has shown that although producers have consistently commanded premiums for their product, competition from other U.S. and global producers selling similar types of sweet onions has cut profits in half.⁸

Other place-based certification marks include Florida Citrus (Fresh from the Florida Sunshine Tree) and Napa Valley wines. Many states have created certification programs for food products originating in their states, such as Jersey Fresh, Minnesota Grown, and A Taste of Iowa.

A Taste of Iowa certification mark can be awarded to a food processor if at least 50 percent of the product's value is attributed to Iowa processing activities or in the case of fresh produce if the products were grown within the state. However, a processed food product, such as the beans in a can of navy beans, may have been grown in a state outside of Iowa and have the A Taste of Iowa certification mark because 50 percent or more of the value is attributable to processing. This may be confusing to consumers who, without understanding the certification standards, view the certification mark and assume the beans are grown in Iowa.

Trademarks and service marks are two other types of U.S. trademarks for agricultural products. A trademark is essentially a brand name, while a service mark helps to distinguish the source or type of service. Some trademarks and service marks may indicate the name of a geographic region, but only the certification mark protects food products based on their origin.

⁸Ibid.

American Viticultural Areas and Appellation of Origin

The American Viticultural Area (AVA) is another type of place-based certification mark in use in the United States. An American Viticultural Area is a grape-growing region distinguishable by geographic features whose boundaries are defined by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau of the U.S. Government.

Additional requirements of AVAs include:

- ◆ Evidence that the AVA's proposed name is locally or nationally known as referring to the specified area;
- ◆ Current or historical documentation that the AVA's boundaries are legitimate;
- ◆ Evidence that growing conditions such as climate, soil, elevation, and physical features are distinctive; and
- ◆ At least 85 percent of the grapes used to make the wine must be grown within the established AVA geographic boundaries in order for the AVA to be referenced on the label.

The United States first used the AVA designation system in 1983. As of July 2004, there were 170 AVAs in the United States, the majority of which are in California.⁹ Currently no area-specific AVAs are within Iowa, nor does Iowa share an AVA with any bordering states. Of the states bordering Iowa, only Missouri, with four, and Wisconsin, with one, currently have area-specific AVAs.

⁹ Based on search of AVA info on the web site of the Professional Friends of Wine. Visited August 2004. <http://www.winepros.org/consumerism/ava.htm>



Iowa's Food Heritage

The AVA designation was modeled after the French “appellation d’origine contrôlée” or AOC system. The French AOC system is much more precise in its rules and specifications than the AVA designation. For example, a French AOC identifies the grape varieties that may be grown in a geographic area, the maximum production per acre, and the minimum level of alcohol required for wines produced in the area. The French word “terroir” refers to an area whose soil and microclimate impart distinctive qualities on food products; this term is most often associated with the production of wine.¹⁰ Each French wine is said to have a taste related to its particular terroir.

Natural Resources, Culture and Food Traditions

This section discusses how Iowa’s natural resources and the culture and traditions of its inhabitants combine to influence the cuisine of the region. We begin with an overview of Iowa’s ecological regions followed by a chronological progression of the region’s inhabitants from prehistoric times through settlements by Native American Indian tribes, white European immigrants, and the newest wave of Asian and Hispanic immigration in the state. The section also will provide an overview, in alphabetical order, of a select number of Iowa-grown foods that have a unique linkage to place, tradition, and/or culture.

Ecological Regions

Iowa is blessed with some of the most fertile soils in the world, with adequate precipitation and temperature range to grow a diverse array of grains, forages, forest products, and horticultural crops. Soil type, precipitation, slope, and elevation all contribute to the dominant natural vegetation, and to the suitability of the land for various agricultural enterprises. Figure 2 shows Iowa’s Ecological Regions as presented by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. These ecological regions denote areas of similarity in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources.¹¹ A specific ecological region is identified through the composition and patterns of both biological and physical characteristics, including the area’s geology, vegetation, climate, soils, and hydrology.¹² The biological and physical characteristics of a site give the landowner the necessary clues to decide which farming enterprises—row crops, pasture, tree crops, vines, etc.—are most appropriate and potentially most profitable, in the long term.

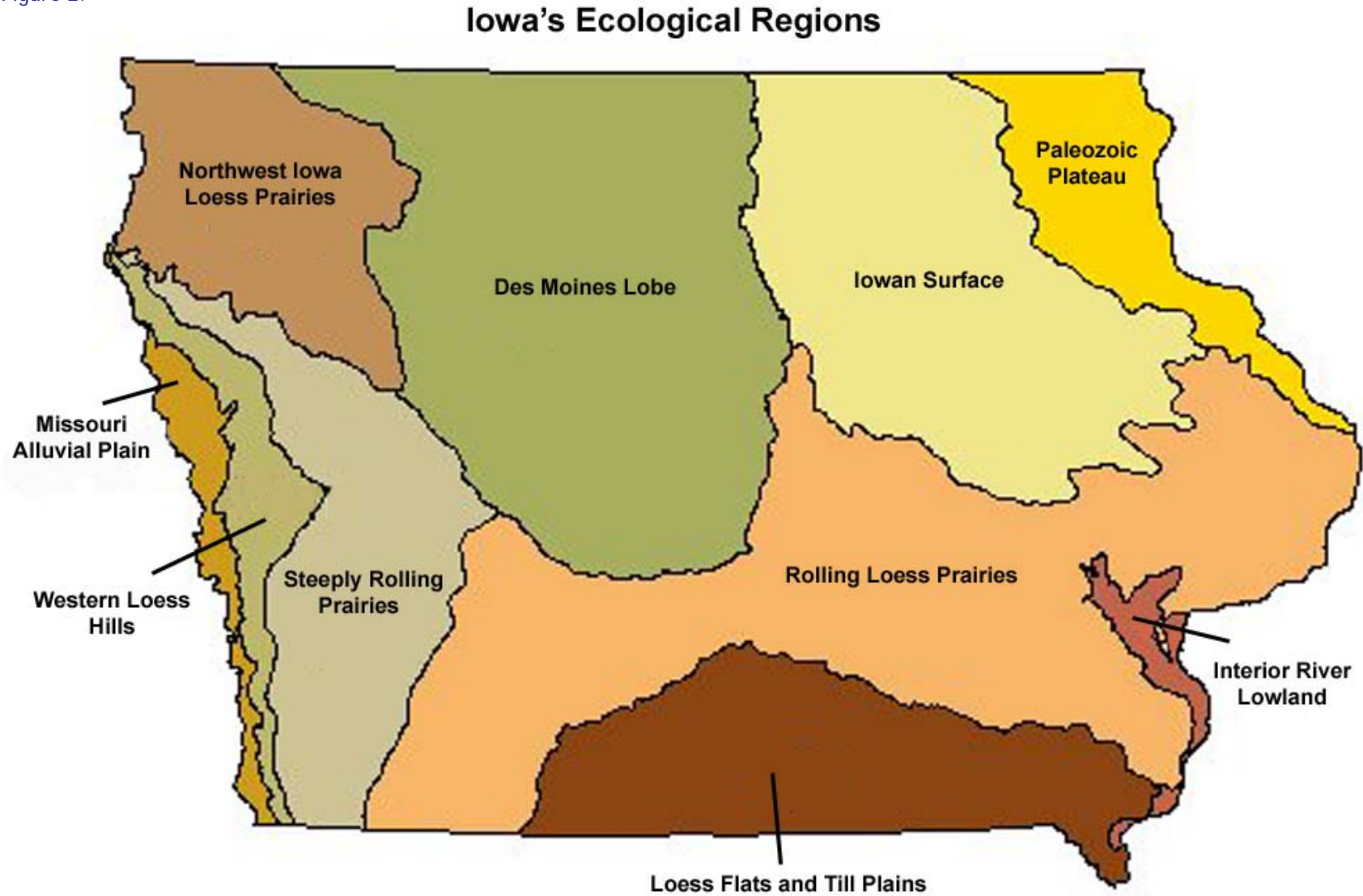
¹⁰ Barham, Elizabeth. 2003. “Translating terroir – the global challenge of French AOC labeling.” *Journal of Rural Studies* 19 (2003) 127-138.

¹¹ Iowa’s Ecological Regions web page. Visited August 2004.
<http://www.iowadnr.com/water/tmdlwqa/wqa/ecoregions.html>

¹² Ibid.

Iowa's Food Heritage

Figure 2.



Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources
<http://www.iowadnr.com/water/tmdlwqa/wqa/ecoregions.html>



Cultural Influences

Foods in Iowa's prehistoric times

Corn (maize) and common beans were introduced as crops some 1,000 years ago to the area that is now Iowa.¹³ Prior to the era of corn and beans, Iowa's prehistoric farmers developed and domesticated several varieties of native plants; seven of those primary plants are shown in Figure 3. Of these seven plants, only sunflower is grown today as a food crop in Iowa and the Midwest.

Foods of Iowa's Native American population

Prior to white European settlement in Iowa, upwards of 20 Native American Indian tribes are known to have inhabited the territory.¹⁴ Figure 4 shows the primary Native American tribes that inhabited Iowa when white Europeans first migrated here in the period 1825-1854. These tribes cultivated food crops, hunted game, and shared their traditional foods with European settlers.

Heirloom fruit and vegetables of Iowa's immigrants

Figure 5 highlights counties that were known to have concentrated settlements of certain immigrant groups in 1870. Among them were Germans in Scott County—where onions were grown in Pleasant Valley—and Czechs in Linn County—an area of commercial cabbage production. These immigrants brought seed with them from their native countries, often hiding the seeds in the hems of their dresses or in suitcase linings so they could pass through customs.¹⁵ Transportation of seeds from their native lands was a way of guaranteeing they could still enjoy some of the foods they were accustomed to eating. According to Seed Savers Exchange based in

Decorah, Iowa, many of the heirloom varieties that arrived in the United States in the 19th century are still being grown in isolated rural areas and in certain communities with strong ethnic traditions.

The immigrants also carried with them a number of recipes for traditional foods, and modified existing recipes based on the foods that were now available to them in their new home. Many of these traditional recipes are still used to make foods that are honored in parts of special family dinners or community food festivals. The interaction of geography and immigrant culture has produced regional styles of cuisine in the United States, including a style commonly found in Iowa and the Midwest.

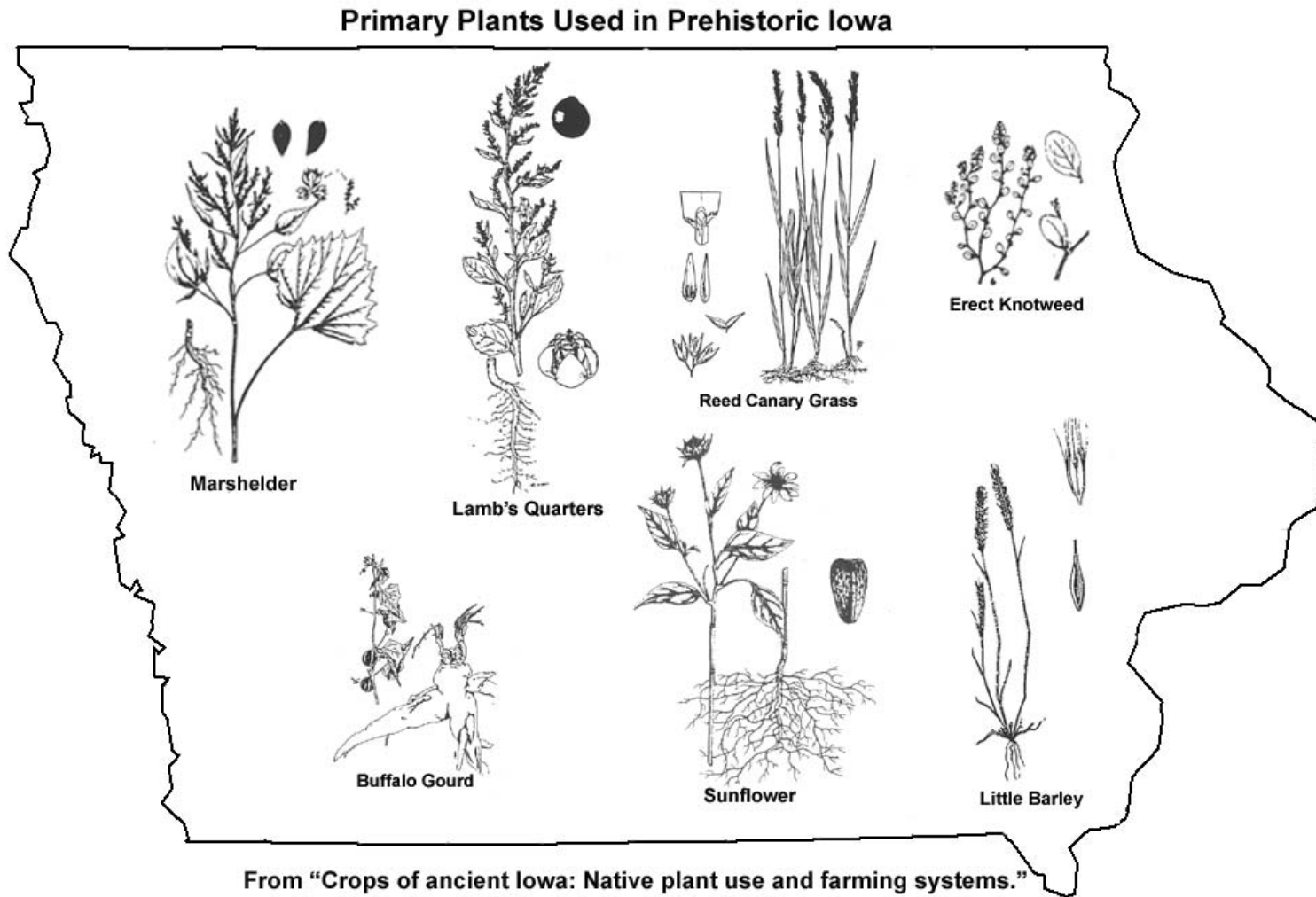
¹³Asch, David, and William Green. 1992. *Crops of Ancient Iowa: Native Plant Use and Farming Systems*. Leopold Center Final Report, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University.

¹⁴Christensen, T. P. 1954. *The Iowa Indians: A Brief History*. p 10. Athens Press, Iowa City.

¹⁵Stickland, Sue. 1998. *Heirloom Vegetables: A Home Gardener's Guide to Finding and Growing Vegetables from the Past*. Gaia Books Limited, London.

Cultural Influences

Figure 3.

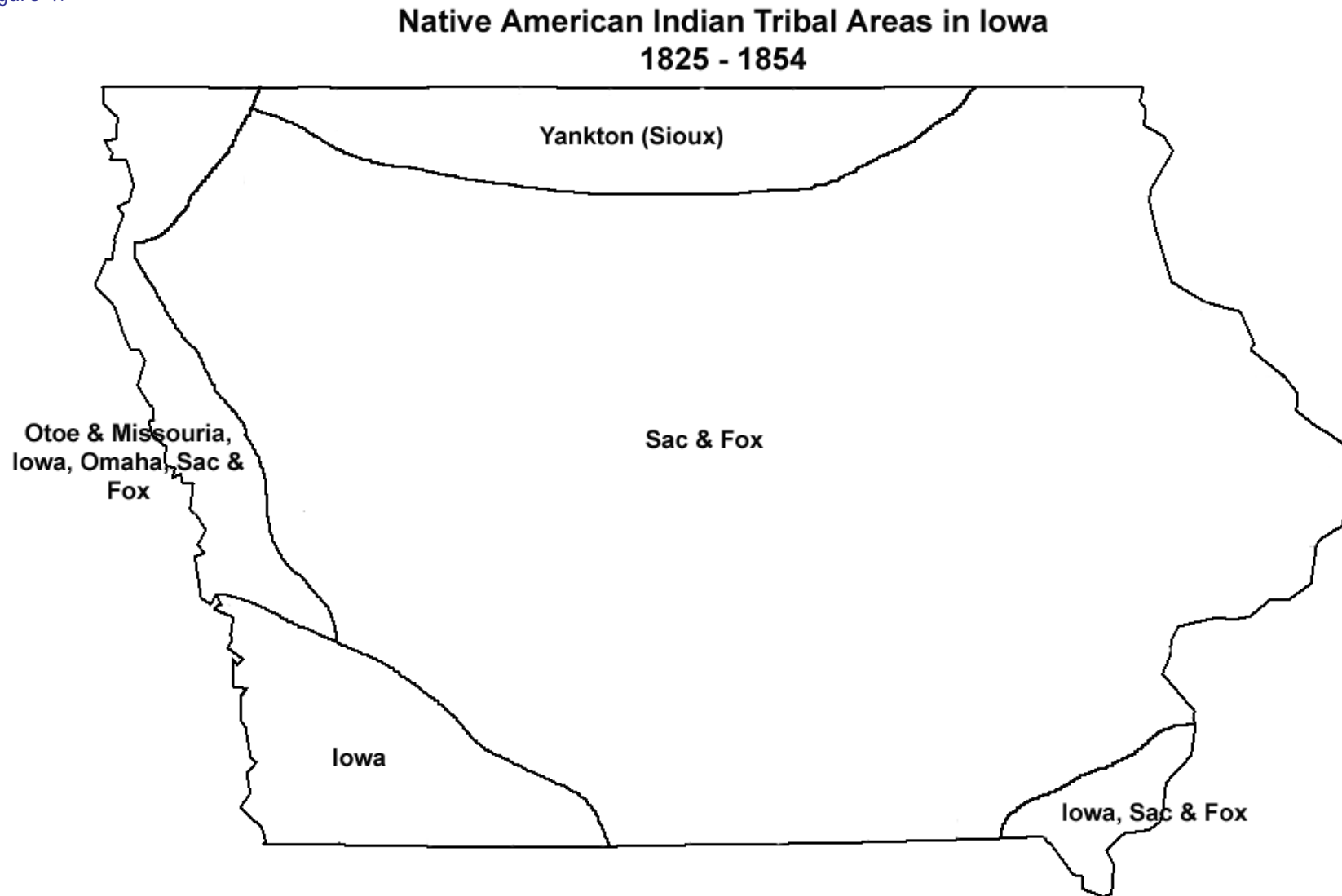


Note: Placement of plant photos is arbitrary and does not necessarily reflect their prehistoric areas of growth.



Cultural Influences

Figure 4.

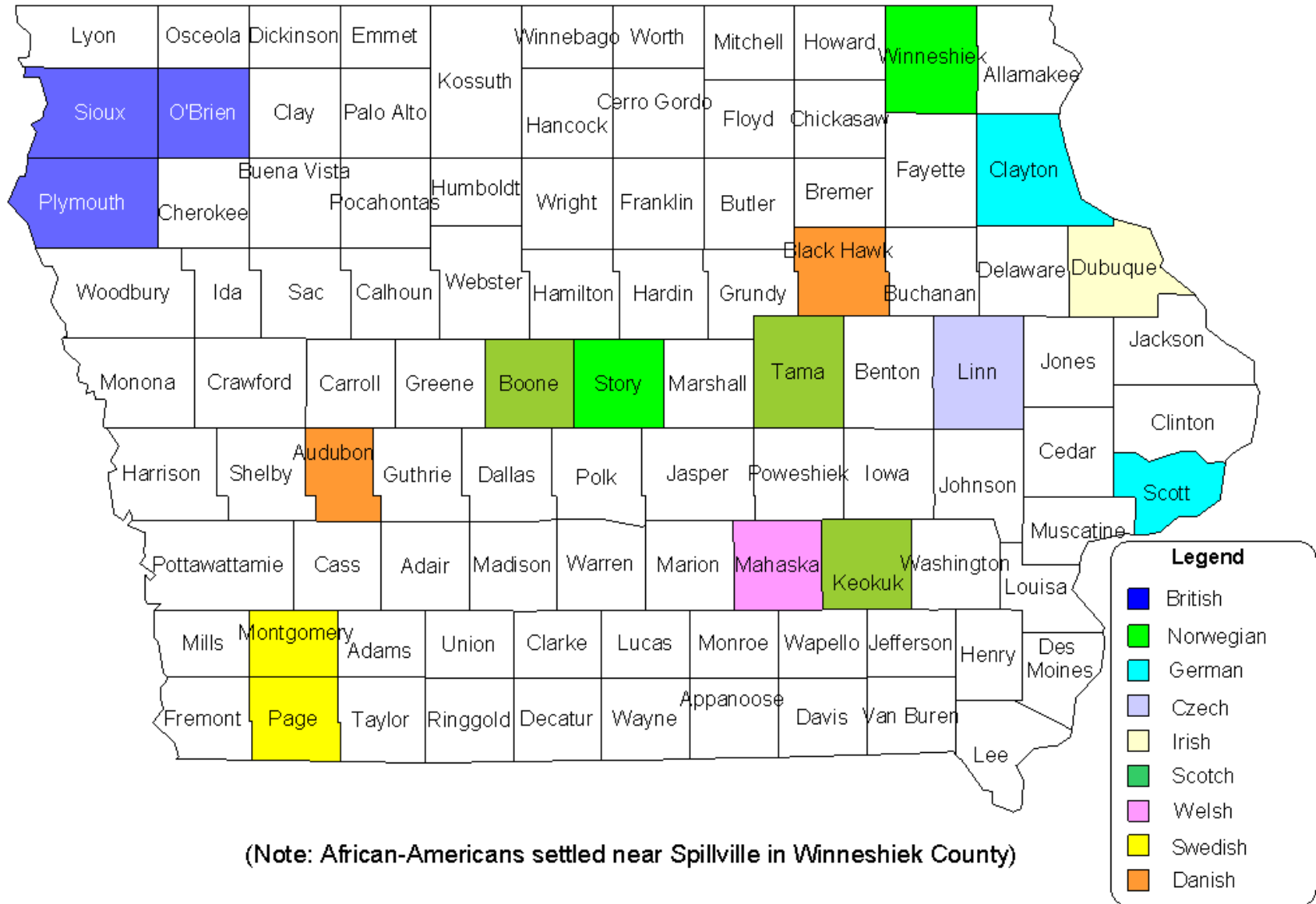


Information extrapolated from:
Prucha, Francis Paul. (1990). *Atlas of American Indian Affairs*. Figure 3, Page 6. University of Nebraska Press

Cultural Influences

Figure 5.

Concentrations of Traditional (White and African-American) Immigrant Groups - 1870



Source: http://fp.uni.edu/iowahist/Other%20Resources/PioneerLife_Lessons_pdfs/Lesson%205-Pioneer%20Settlement%20.pdf



Iowa Place-based Foods

Iowa's Amana Colonies

The seven Amana colonies were founded by a German religious sect called the Community of True Inspiration; this group had separated from the Lutheran church and came to the United States to escape religious persecution. The group (referred to as Inspirationalists) established its first community in the United States in 1843 outside of Buffalo, New York. The group outgrew its New York community within ten years. They purchased land along the Iowa River and the first village, Amana, was laid out in 1855. Within ten years six additional villages had been established, and the Amana Society was firmly established in Iowa.

Communal living for members of the Amana Society meant self-sufficiency for food and clothing. They grew their own crops for food, raised livestock, baked bread, smoked meats, and made wine and beer. Many of the curing and smoking recipes used in the Amana Society came from the German province of Westphalia, including the methods for curing and smoking hams to give them a distinctive flavor.¹⁶

In 1932 the members of the Amana Society voted to abandon the communal way of living and incorporate their holdings into a profit-sharing corporation. Today, heritage tourism is an important part of the economy for the Amana area. Amana colony foods were renowned for their taste and quality and today Amana wines, hams, jams, jellies, and other food products are sold in the colonies and through other retail outlets in Iowa and the upper Midwest.

¹⁶Amana Colonies National Register of Historic Place Travel Itinerary. Visited August 2004. www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/amana/amana.htm

Hawkeye-Delicious apple



Most Iowans are not aware that Iowa was a top apple-producing state through the 1920s (Figure 6), and that the Delicious apple is of Iowa origin. Madison County farmer Jesse Hiatt discovered the variety near Peru, Iowa, in the 1870s. He called it Hawkeye and sent apples to the Louisiana, Missouri fruit show in 1893 where it won first prize. He sold the propagating rights to the Missouri-based Stark Brothers nursery in 1894.¹⁷ Stark named the variety Delicious.

By the end of World War I, the popularity of the Delicious apple had spread across the United States, with most of the production occurring in the state of Washington and elsewhere in the Northwest. Even at that time, Iowa fruit farmers were lamenting Iowa's lack of visibility and profit from the success of the Delicious apple:

“The flavor of our home-grown apples is so much superior to the western irrigated product that it seems a shame they should monopolize our markets. See the reputation they have won for the Delicious apple, and yet the Delicious originated in an Iowa orchard. They have reaped the glory for this wonderful apple, and it hurts to have them do it.”¹⁸

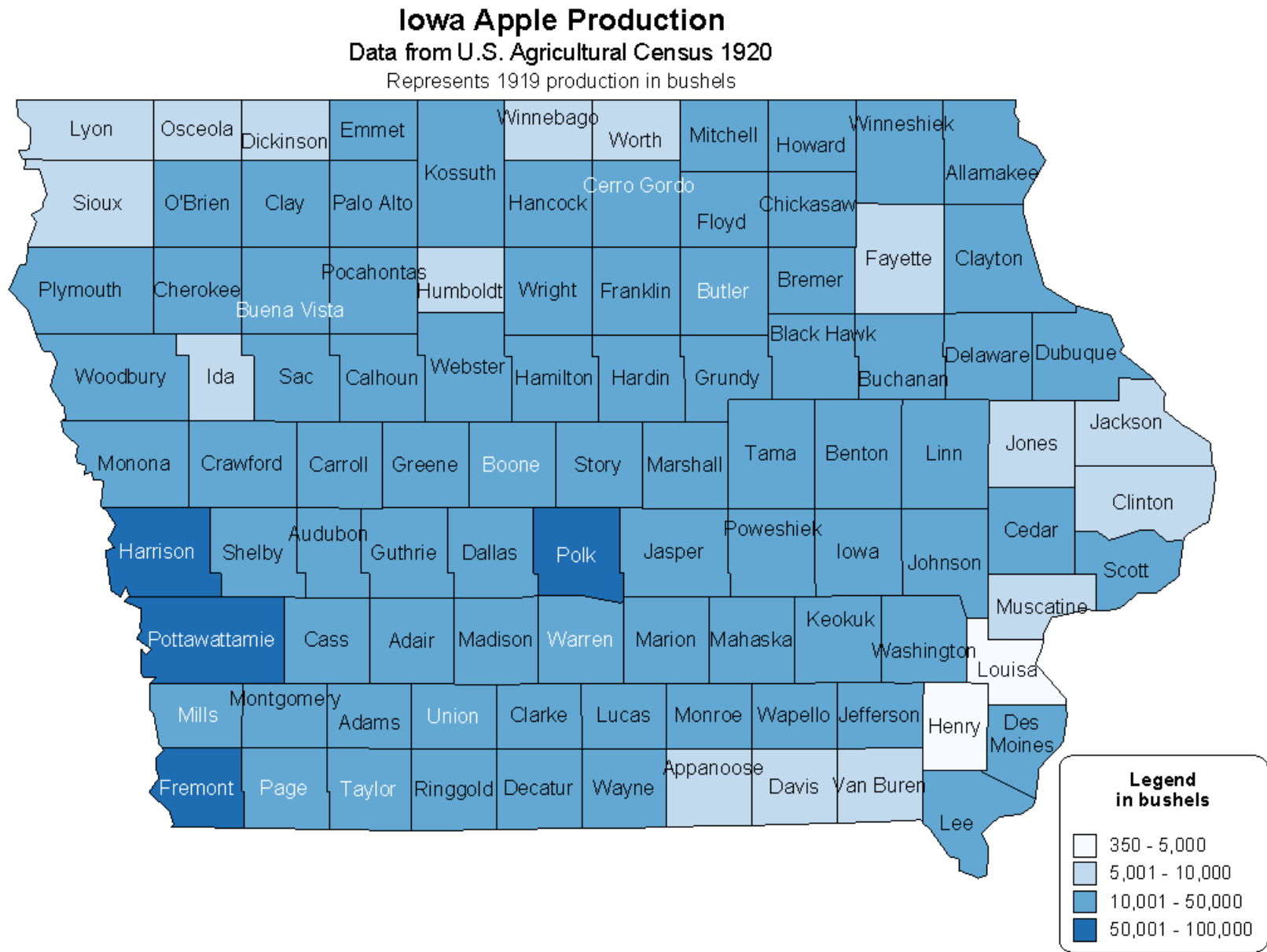
For the past decade the percentage share of the market for the Delicious apple has waned significantly, as other varieties (Fuji, Pink Lady, Granny Smith, Braeburn) have become more popular with U.S. consumers. There is potential to redevelop Iowa's original Hawkeye/Delicious apple, linking it to its Madison County heritage.

¹⁷ Pellett, Kent. (1941). “Pioneers in Iowa Horticulture.” Written for the Iowa State Horticultural Society in commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of its founding.

¹⁸ Clum, Woodward. 1917. *The Iowa Horticulturalist*, Vol 52, p. 436.

Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 6



Iowa Place-based Foods

This development could contribute to a growing number of tourists in the area who come to the county to visit the covered bridges. The popularity of these bridges increased markedly after the release of the Hollywood movie *The Bridges of Madison County*.

Jonathan apples

Harrison County, in particular the hilly areas in the bluff-line along the Missouri River near Mondamin, was known to be one of the best Jonathan producing regions in the country during the early part of the 20th century.¹⁹ The bluffs provided good air and water drainage to the orchards. First introduced to southern Iowa before the Civil War, the Jonathan apple became, along with the Ben Davis apple, one of the leading commercial varieties in southern Iowa. One orchardist from the Mondamin area summarized the popularity of Jonathan apples in the following manner:

...You are expected to read this paper in Mondamin, and that is the very citadel of the Jonathan (apple) and for anyone living around there the placing of any variety ahead of the Jonathan is nothing short of treason...²⁰

Grapes and wines

The grape and wine industry in developed countries subscribes to the belief that vineyards with good air drainage and certain soil types will, over time, produce the highest quality grapes and wines. Iowa was the sixth-largest grape producing state in the nation in 1919, with more than 12 million pounds produced (Figure 7).

¹⁹ Clowes, Harry. 1927. "Fruit and Vegetable Production in Iowa." M.S. Thesis, Iowa State College.

²⁰ F.P. Spencer, 1916. *The Iowa Horticulturalist*, Volume 51, p. 436.

Historically, one of the largest commercial grape-growing regions in Iowa was within the Missouri loess soil area near Council Bluffs.

The loess soils along the bluffs and in the Loess Hills provided the ideal soil, and the undulating terrain provided ideal air drainage to grow high-quality grapes. The Council Bluffs Grape Growers Association was organized in 1893 by 21 of the higher-volume growers in the area.²¹ Because of a reputation for better quality fruit than that grown elsewhere, grapes marketed by the Council Bluffs Grape Growers Association in the 1926 season brought its members a \$16.00 per ton average premium (over the average U.S. price).²²

Iowa's grape and wine industry has undergone significant redevelopment in the past several years. In 2000 there were a handful of commercial vineyards and an estimated 30 acres of grapes in production. Since 2000 an estimated 225 commercial vineyards have been established in the state.²³ Although Iowa has a rich history of grape production, there is not comprehensive research information on the performance of current Iowa-grown grape cultivars and the quality of the wines they produce. The connection between place and quality/characteristics of wine holds promise in Iowa, but according to one prominent Iowa winemaker it will take 15 to 20 years of work to develop wines that truly display a regional identity.²⁴

²¹ Maney, T. J. 1921. "Grape Production and Distribution in Western Iowa." Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 199.

²² Clowes, Harry. 1927. "Fruit and Vegetable Production in Iowa." M.S. Thesis, Iowa State College.

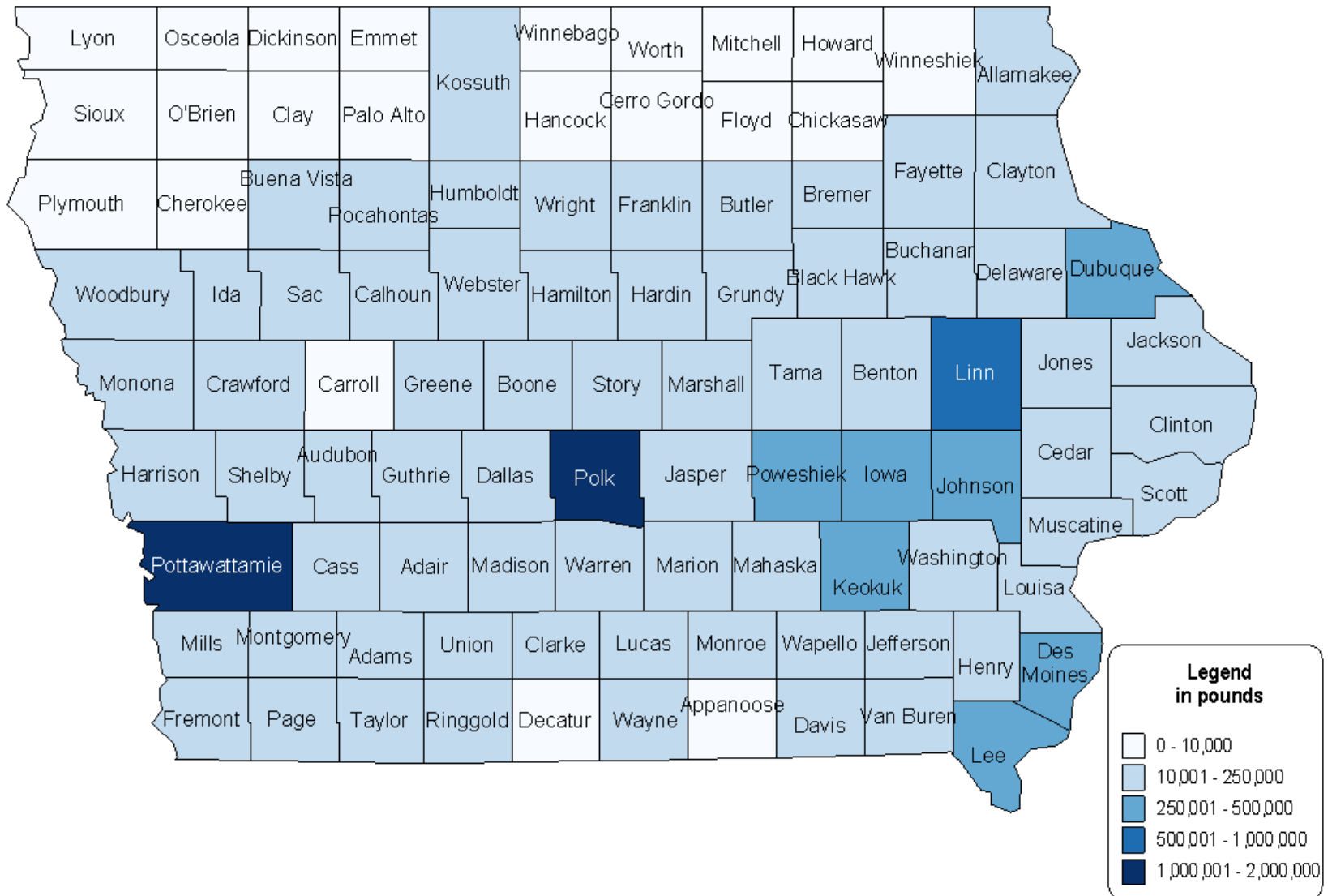
²³ ISU News Service release, July 2004.

²⁴ Comment made by Dr. Paul Tabor – Tabor Vineyards, at the Vine and Wine Workshop, Nashua, Iowa. August 16, 2003. Dr. Tabor's Powerpoint presentation can be found at: <http://viticulture.hort.iastate.edu/events/vinewineaug03/winemaking.pdf>

Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 7.

Iowa Grape Production
 Data from U.S. Agricultural Census 1920
 Represents 1919 grape production in pounds



Iowa Place-based Foods

Honey



Honey is an excellent example of a place-based food because the flavor of the product depends so heavily on the types of flower pollen on which the bees feed. Honey producers market alfalfa, buckwheat, clover, and mixed floral honeys. In 1921 five beekeepers near Sioux City, Iowa formed a cooperative marketing association so they could market their honey at a greater profit through the sharing of services and processing equipment.²⁵ The cooperative—the Sioux Honey Association—still operates three processing facilities in the United States, including a Sioux City, Iowa facility. Many of Iowa’s apiarists (honey producers) direct market their honey through farmers markets, community supported agriculture enterprises, and retail grocery stores. According to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Honey Directory, there are currently 42 honey producers in 32 Iowa counties.²⁶

Maple syrup



Maple syrup is one of the few foods that truly originated in North America. Figure 8 shows Iowa maple syrup production by county from the 1940 U.S. agricultural census. Sugar maple, black maple, silver maple, and box elder are the trees most commonly used in the production of maple syrup. The primary areas of production coincide with those areas of the state with the highest percentage of forest cover (Figure 9) and the Paleozoic Plateau ecological region (see Figure 2) that is best suited for hardwood forests. This ecological area influences the presence of maple and other tree species which are suitable to maple syrup production.

²⁵ Sioux Honey Association web site – “Sue Bee Honey History.” Viewed August 2004. www.suebee.com/history.asp.

²⁶ Iowa Honey Producers Directory. Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Visited August 2004. <http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/pdfs/honey1.pdf>

Maytag Blue Cheese

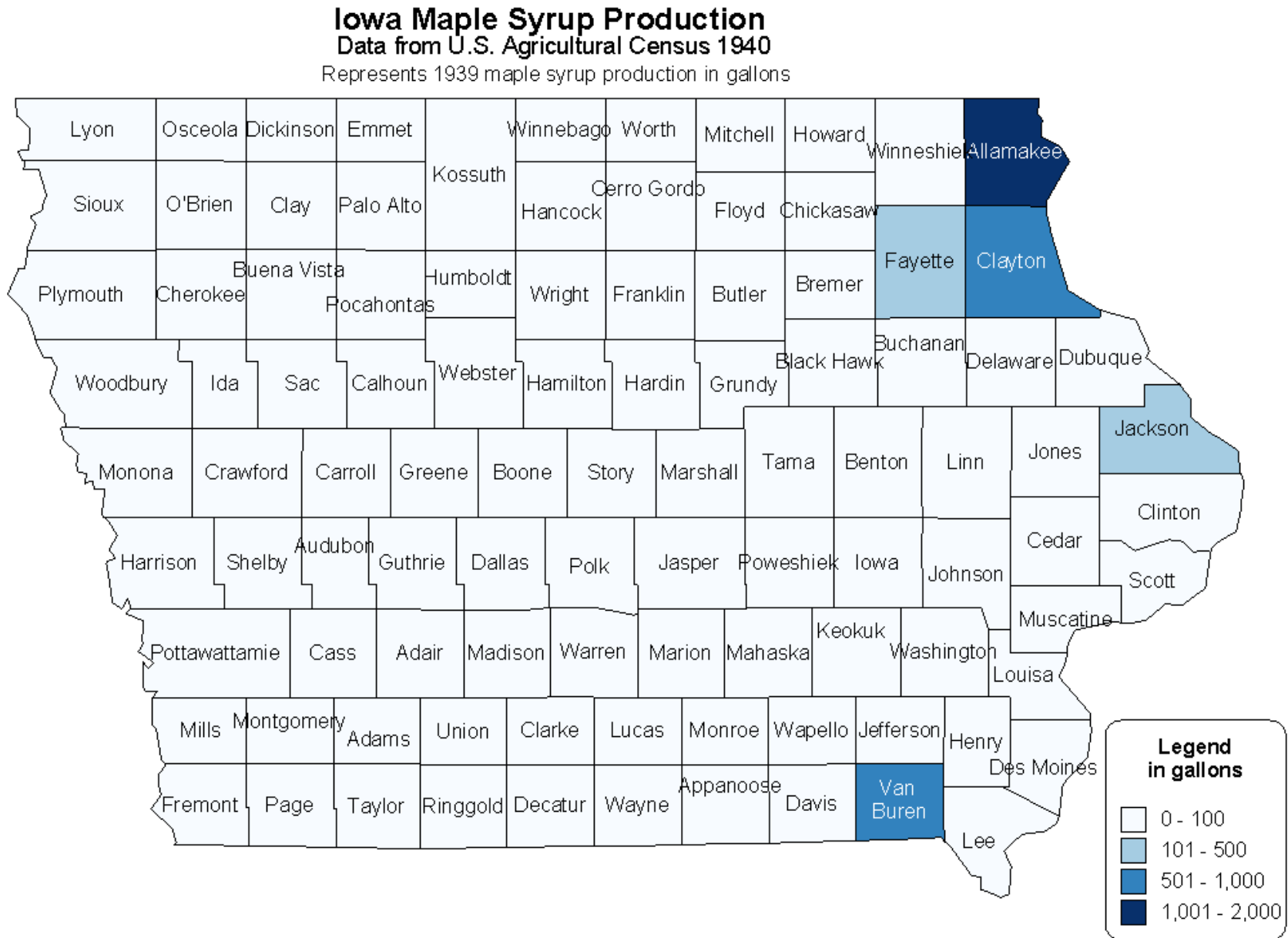


Blue cheese is a general classification for cheeses with a blue-green mold. The bluish color is due to a mold from fungi. European examples of blue cheese include Gorgonzola (Italy) and Stilton (England). Originally these cheeses were grown in caves, where the mold was naturally present.²⁷ Maytag Blue Cheese was developed by Iowa State University researchers and Fritz Maytag (son of the founder of the Maytag washing machine company) in 1941. The milk for the cheese once came from the Maytag dairy, but today comes from a local dairy cooperative. Maytag Blue Cheese is aged in specially designed caves.

²⁷Food Reference web site. Viewed August 2004. www.foodreference.com/html/artbluecheese.html.

Iowa Place-based Foods

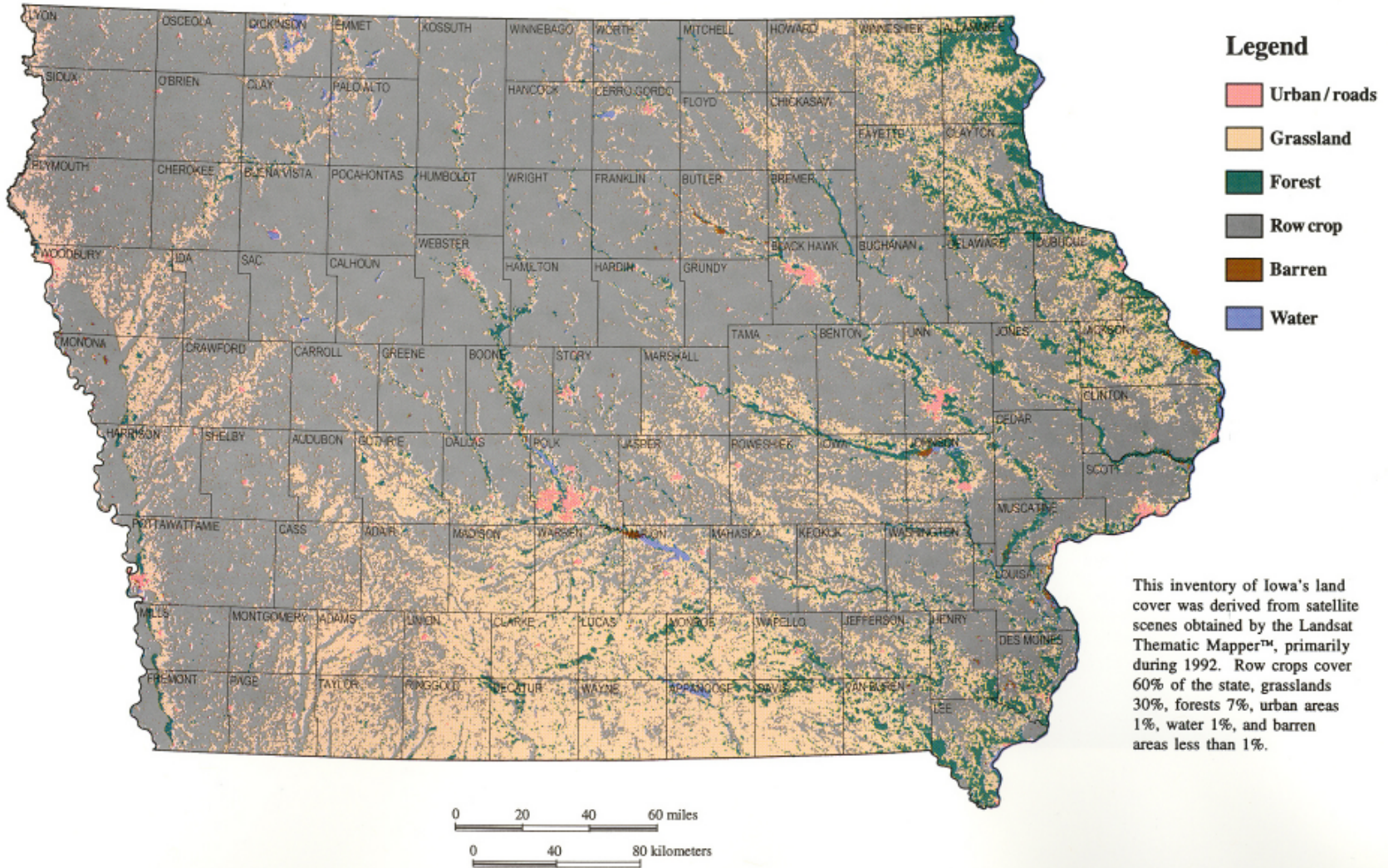
Figure 8.



Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 9.

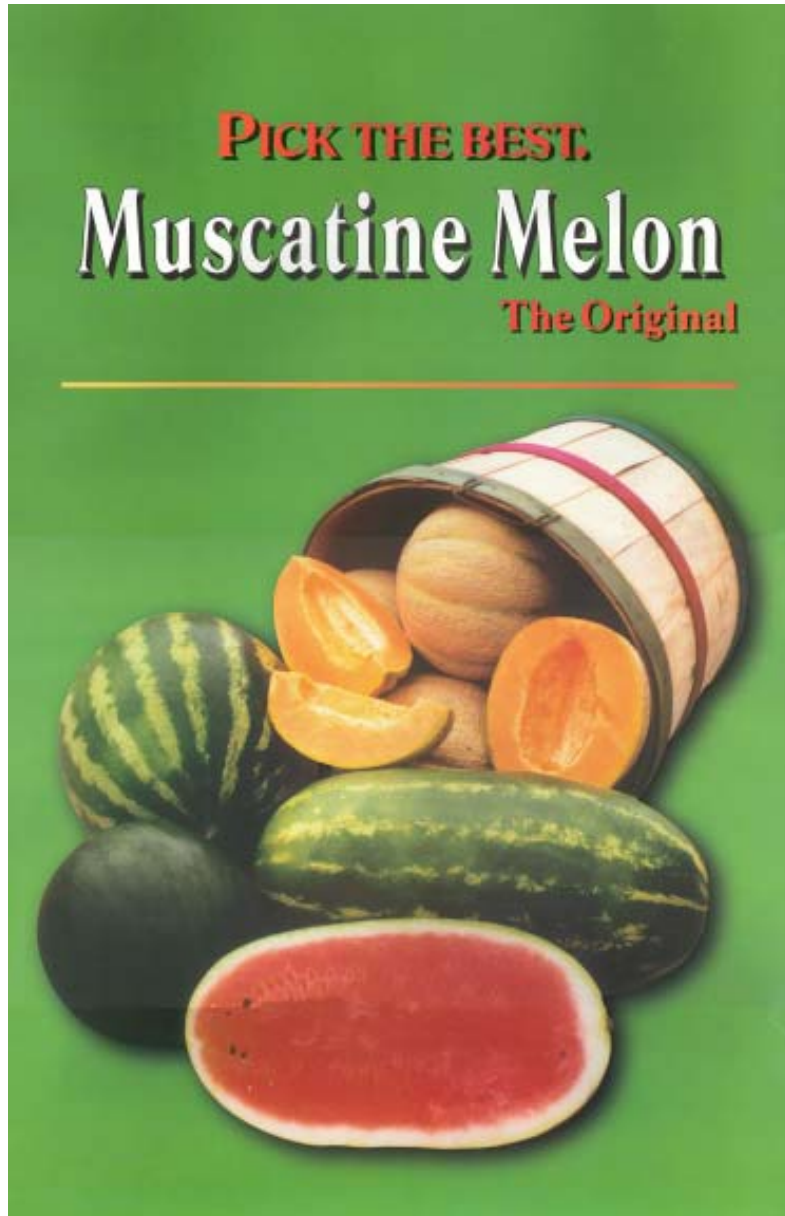
LAND COVER MAP OF IOWA 1999



This inventory of Iowa's land cover was derived from satellite scenes obtained by the Landsat Thematic Mapper™, primarily during 1992. Row crops cover 60% of the state, grasslands 30%, forests 7%, urban areas 1%, water 1%, and barren areas less than 1%.

Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 10. A poster for the Muscatine melon.



Muscatine melon

Figure 10 shows a poster advertising the Muscatine melon. The sandy soils along the Mississippi River south of Muscatine have been renowned since the late 1800s as the source of exceptionally sweet and juicy melons. Both muskmelon (cantaloupe) and watermelon are grown in this area, primarily around Muscatine Island, Fruitland, and near Conesville. Although the number of producers has declined in recent years, Muscatine melons can still be found at grocery stores and roadside stands throughout eastern Iowa starting in late July. The best known Muscatine melons are several varieties of muskmelon characterized by prominent ridges, deep orange color, and a juicy, fragrant flesh. The Leopold Center's Marketing and Food Systems Initiative is supporting a case study of the Muscatine melon, which will be available on the Center's web site in fall 2004.



Iowa Place-based Foods

Onions

A number of Germans who settled in Scott County near the Mississippi River began growing onions after the Civil War. By the 1920s, the Pleasant Valley section of Scott County and the St. Ansgar-Clear Lake areas in Mitchell and Cerro Gordo counties were the two most prolific onion-producing areas in Iowa.²⁸ The Pleasant Valley district included approximately 500 acres in the 1920s, with the average farm being 10 acres.²⁹ The main part of the onion-producing area in the Pleasant Valley area of Scott County was along the Mississippi flood plain, approximately one mile wide and six miles long.³⁰ Bremer silt loam was the dominant and most important soil type in this region. The Pleasant Valley Onion Growers Association was organized in 1910 to market onions to local and area markets.³¹ Growers of the time favored two varieties, the Red Globe and the Yellow Bottleneck.³²

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Irwin, A.T., and W.L. Harter. 1925. *The Onion Industry in Pleasant Valley, Iowa*. Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 225. Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts.

³⁰ Clowes, Harry. 1927. "Fruit and Vegetable Production in Iowa." M.S. Thesis, Iowa State College.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Irwin, A.T., and W.L. Harter. 1925. *The Onion Industry in Pleasant Valley, Iowa*. Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 225. Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts.

Popcorn

In 1888 an Odebolt, Iowa farmer tried growing several acres of popcorn commercially; by 1900 operations around Odebolt in Sac County bought, housed, and shipped more popcorn than anywhere else in Iowa or the Midwest.³³ Ida and Sac counties remained the primary popcorn growing regions for the state in the 1920s. According to one 1926 report, the Morraine type soils near Sac City produce a better quality popcorn than the heavier soils near Odebolt.³⁴ In 2002, Iowa's popcorn was grown primarily in western Iowa, with Sac, Crawford, and Monona as the production leaders. Figure 11 shows popcorn production (2002 U.S. Agricultural Census) and location of popcorn companies (2002 Iowa Department of Economic Development).

Potatoes

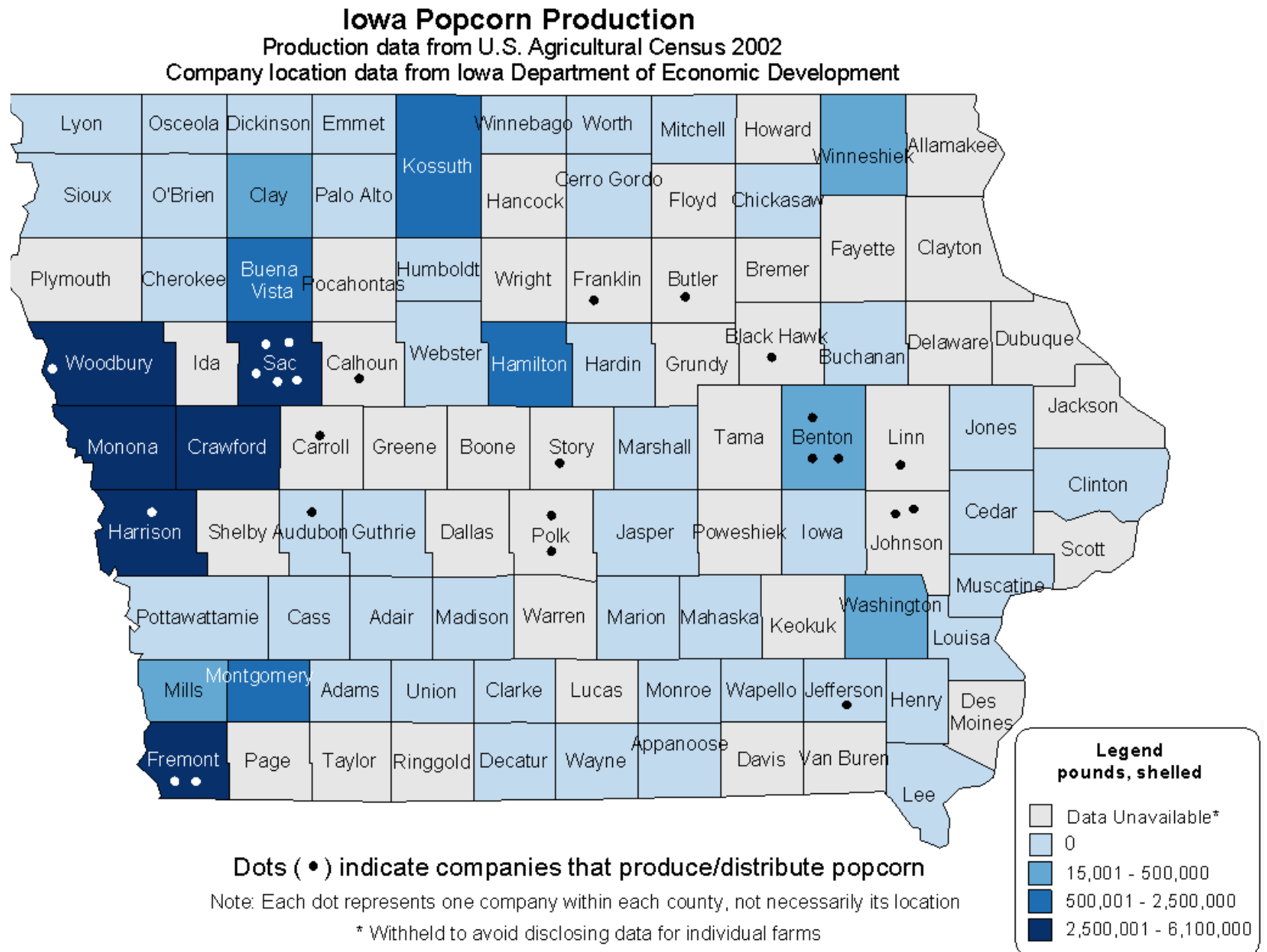
In the early part of the 20th century, part of Mitchell County was known to be one of the best potato-producing regions in the upper Midwest because of its fine-grained, sandy soils. Figure 12 shows potato production in Iowa by county from the 1920 Agricultural Census. More than 80,000 acres of potatoes were cultivated in Iowa in the mid-1920s; the 2002 Agricultural Census indicates that there is slightly more than 1,000 acres in production.

³³ Puckett, Susan. 1988. *A Cook's Tour of Iowa*. p. 95. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City.

³⁴ Burnett, L.C. and Dorchester, C.S. Observations made on Iowa State College popcorn investigation trip. November, 1926.

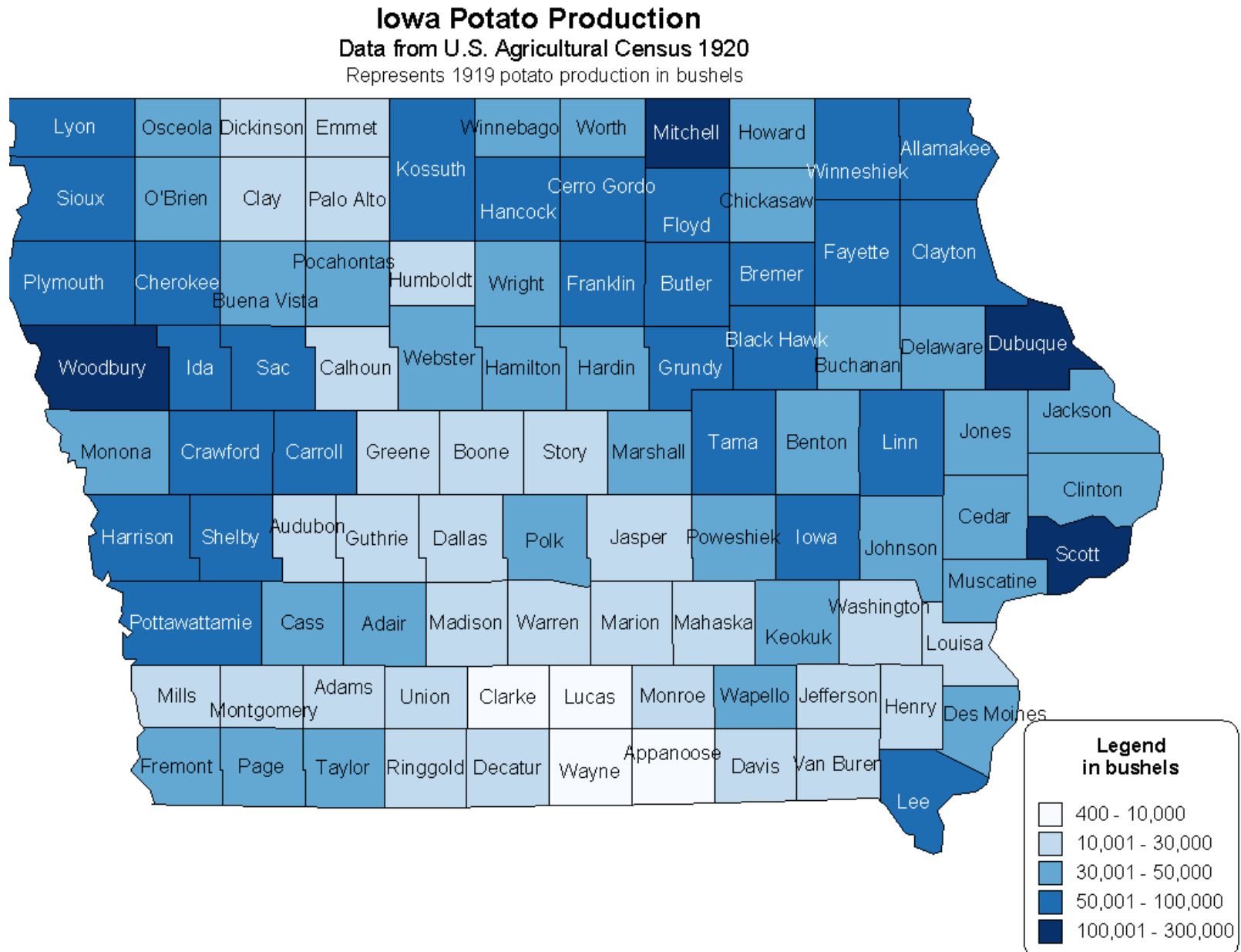
Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 11.



Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 12.



Iowa Place-based Foods

Squash

Iowan Robert Fullerton, while traveling in Europe, ran across a variety of squash in Copenhagen, Denmark, and brought home some seeds and gave them to Sestier Brothers, market growers for Des Moines.³⁵ In 1913 the Iowa Seed Company (headquartered in Des Moines) featured this squash, called Table Queen in their catalog.³⁶ The Des Moines Market Gardener's Association requested at the 1919 convention of the Iowa Vegetable Grower's Association that the name be changed to the Des Moines squash.³⁷ Today the squash is known by its widely accepted name, the common Acorn Squash.

Sweet corn

Although Minnesota—the “land of the Jolly Green Giant”—was the Midwest leader in canned vegetable production, Iowa played a significant role. According to a 1922 report, Iowa led the world in canned sweet corn production.³⁸ In 1924 Iowa processed locally grown sweet corn at 58 canning factories in 36 different counties.³⁹ A map of those factories, along with sweet corn acreage for 1923-24 can be found in Figure 13. Iowans still love their sweet corn: According to the 2002 Agricultural Census it is produced on nearly 4,900 acres on 462 Iowa farms and is a favorite at farmers markets, summer festivals, and the Iowa State Fair. Sweet corn is truly part of Iowa's agricultural heritage and one of the most familiar and desirable tastes of an Iowa summer.

³⁵ E.S. Haber. 1923. *The Iowa Horticulturalist*. Volume 58, p. 303

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Report from Iowa Dairy and Food Commissioner, Iowa. p. 41, 1922.

³⁹ Clowes, Harry. 1927. “Fruit and Vegetable Production in Iowa.” M.S. Thesis, Iowa State College.

Sweet potatoes

Throughout the 1930s southeastern Iowa was part of the commercial sweet potato growing region for the central states—one of three primary sweet potato growing regions in the United States (Figure 14). Sweet potatoes are best adapted to sandy soils, and the Muscatine area, including Muscatine Island, was the center of the Iowa portion of the central states sweet potato growing region.

Historic areas of concentrated fruit production in Iowa

Figure 15 shows the areas of concentrated fruit production in Iowa as outlined in the 1940 U.S. Agricultural Census. Prior to the dominance of corn and soybeans on the landscape, Iowa grew a diverse array of horticultural crops, including tree and vine fruits. The maps show produce symbols in the top producing counties that would be considered commercial areas of production. Plums were found in Boone, Greene, and Webster counties, while pears appeared in several southern Iowa counties, including Appanoose, Decatur, and VanBuren.

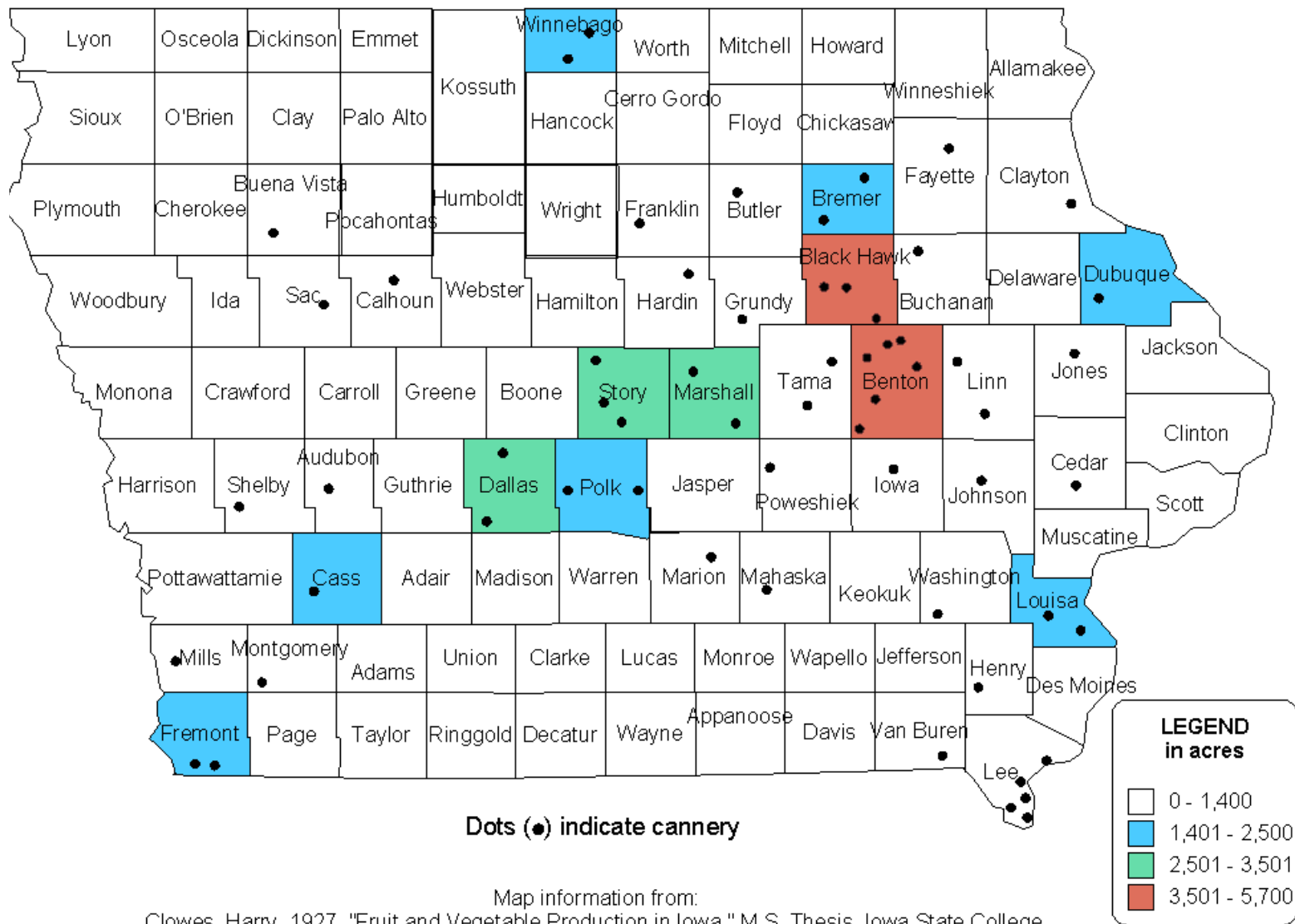
These areas of concentrated production are found in and around population centers and, more importantly, in areas where the soils, topography, and climate were conducive to production of these foods.



Iowa Place-based Foods

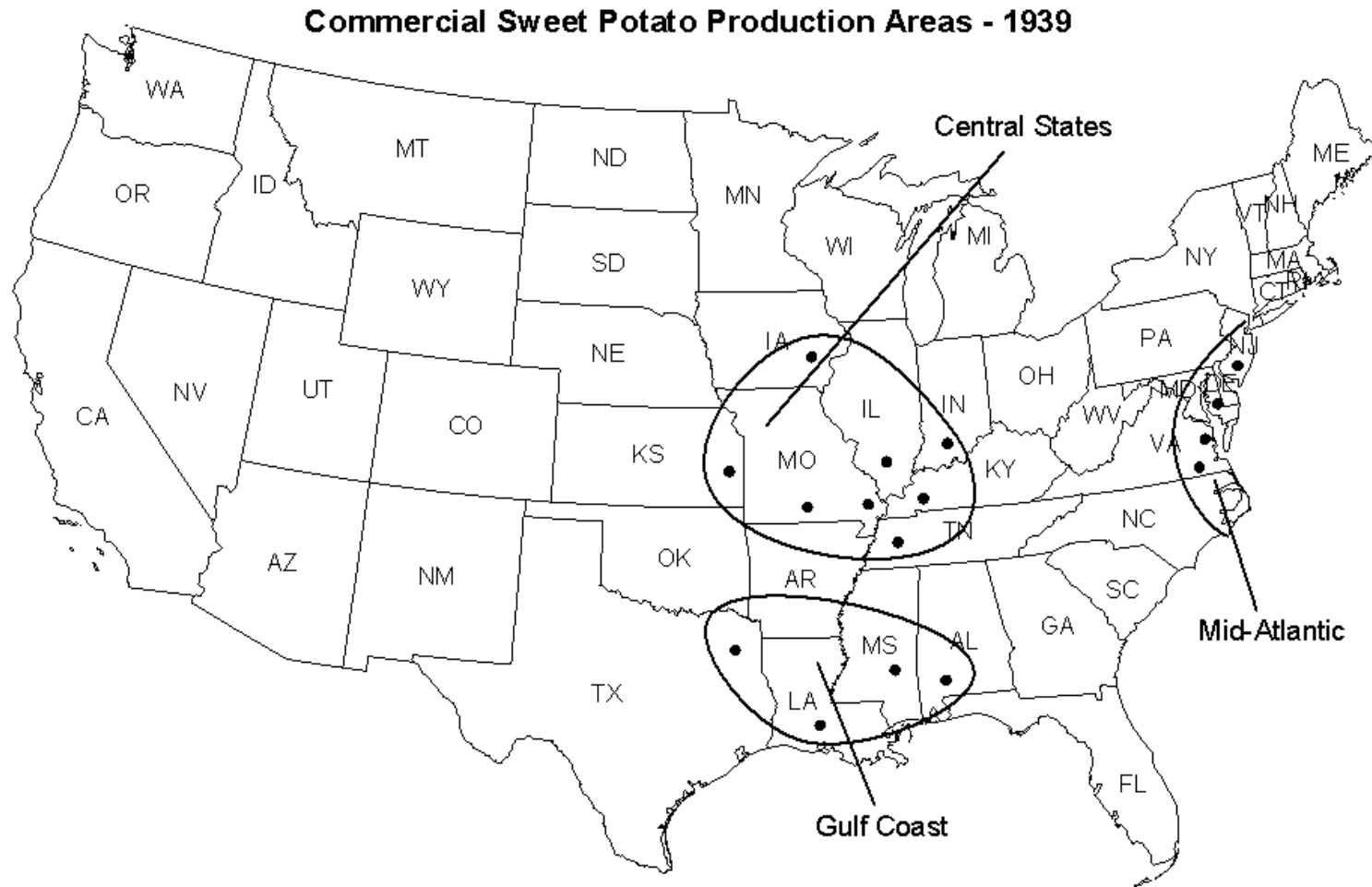
Figure 13.

Sweet Corn for Manufacture (Canning) Average Acreage 1923-1924



Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 14.



Information Cited from - "Handling and Marketing Iowa Sweet Potatoes,"
Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin P32, 1941, P. 78



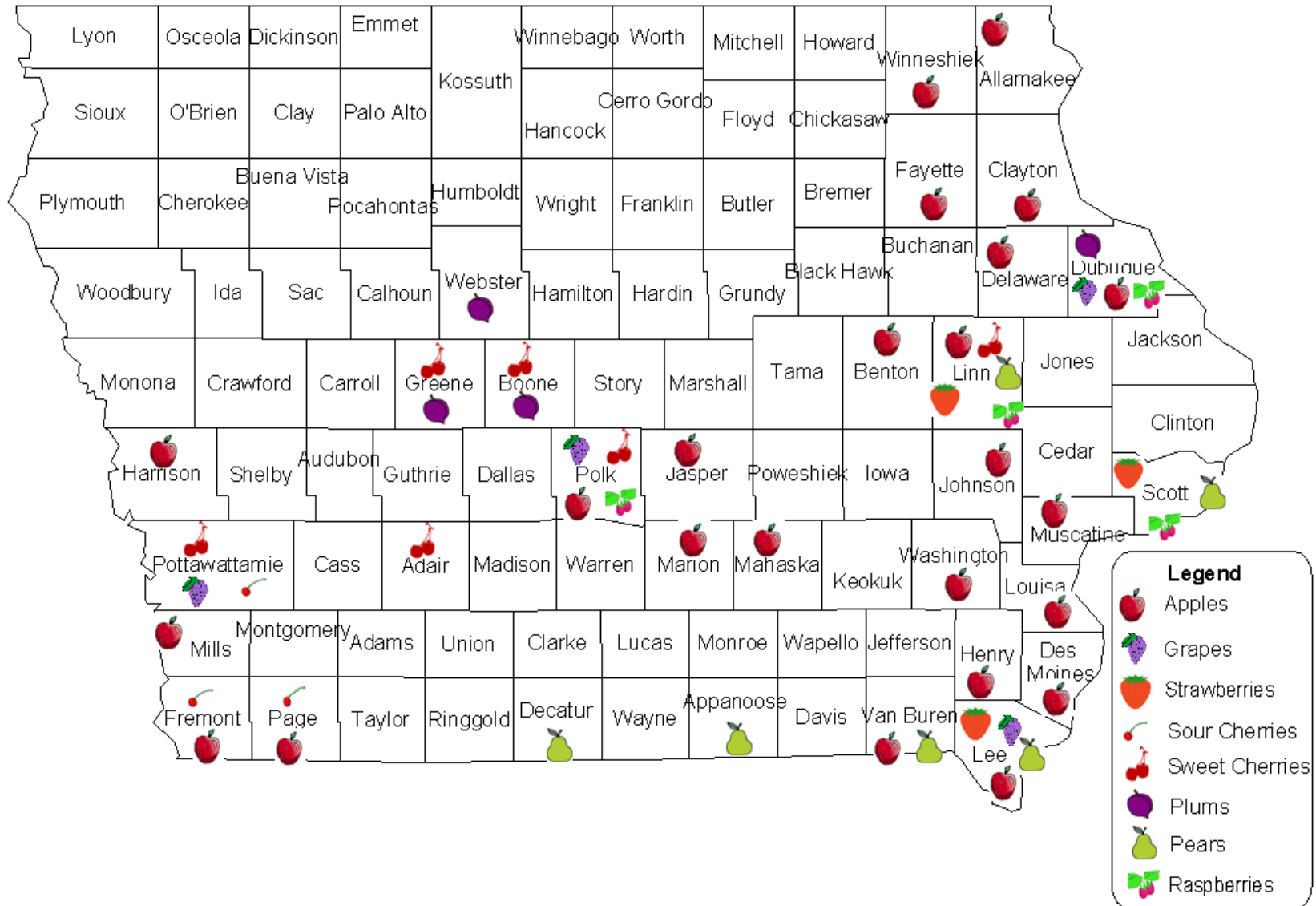
Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 15.

Areas of Concentrated Production for Selected Food Enterprises - 1940

Data from U.S. Agricultural Census 1940

Represents 1939 production



Iowa Place-based Foods

Livestock heritage breeds

Meat production for the commodity market currently favors the use of a few highly specialized breeds selected for maximum output. Iowa's history and tradition as a farm state includes development of numerous new livestock breeds. Many traditional livestock breeds have lost popularity; some are threatened with extinction. An example of these heritage breeds where Iowa played a significant role in development include Hereford hogs, of which John Schulte from Norway, Iowa was one of the most prominent breeders.³⁹

Traditional food needs of Iowa's newest immigrants

Figures 16 and 17 show Asian and Hispanic population by county in Iowa as a percentage of the total population (2000 U.S. Census). According to census data, the Asian population in Iowa has increased 70 percent from 1990 to 2000, while the Hispanic population has increased by 150 percent during that same time period.⁴⁰ The rise in Asian and Hispanic population has led to an increase in the demand for traditional food products characteristic for these populations. Asian and Hispanic grocery stores and restaurants have opened in many of the communities with significant populations of the two groups.

The increase in Asian and Hispanic immigration to Iowa also has led to an increase in immigrant farmers in Iowa. According to the 2002 Agricultural Census, there are 64 Asian farm operators in Iowa; 20 of them list farming as their primary occupation.

³⁹ Oklahoma State University animal breeds web site. Visited August 2004. <http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/swine/hereford/index.htm>

⁴⁰ Iowa's Hispanic Population— 2000. Office of Social and Economic Trends Analysis, Iowa State University. October 2003. <http://www.seta.iastate.edu/population/publications/hispanics2000.pdf>

The census indicates that there are 537 Hispanic farm operators in Iowa; 351 of them list farming as their primary occupation. Many of these farmers are raising traditional foods to feed their families and communities. They sell their products at farmers markets and help to supply the restaurants and grocery stores in their communities. The demand for unique food products valued by these ethnic groups in the state will rise; it remains to be seen how that demand will be met.

Agritourism and its potential impact

An agritourism enterprise is a business conducted by a farm operator for the enjoyment and education of the public, to promote the products of the farm and thereby generate additional farm income.⁴¹ Agritourism is an important option for improving the incomes and potential economic viability of small and midsize farms and rural communities. Heritage tourism, which features historical and cultural sights to help people learn about an area's past, is often associated with agritourism. In the European Union, policies and regulations that support agritourism are connected to those efforts that protect food products through GIs and regional foods.⁴² In Italy, agritourism has increased 25 percent over the past five years, mostly due to the increase in lodging facilities.⁴³ Figure 18 is a photo of an "Agriturismo" location in the northern portion of the Veneto region of Italy; this operation maintains a working dairy, restaurant, cheese-making facility, meat and cheese shop, and hotel for visitors.

⁴¹Hilchey, Duncan. 1993. *Agritourism in New York State: Opportunities and Challenges in Farm-Based Recreation and Hospitality*. Ithaca, NY. Farming Alternatives Program, Cornell University.

⁴² Clemens, Roxanne. 2004. "Keeping Farmers on the Land: Agritourism in the European Union." Iowa Ag Review, Center for Agricultural and Rural Development, Iowa State University, Summer, 2004.

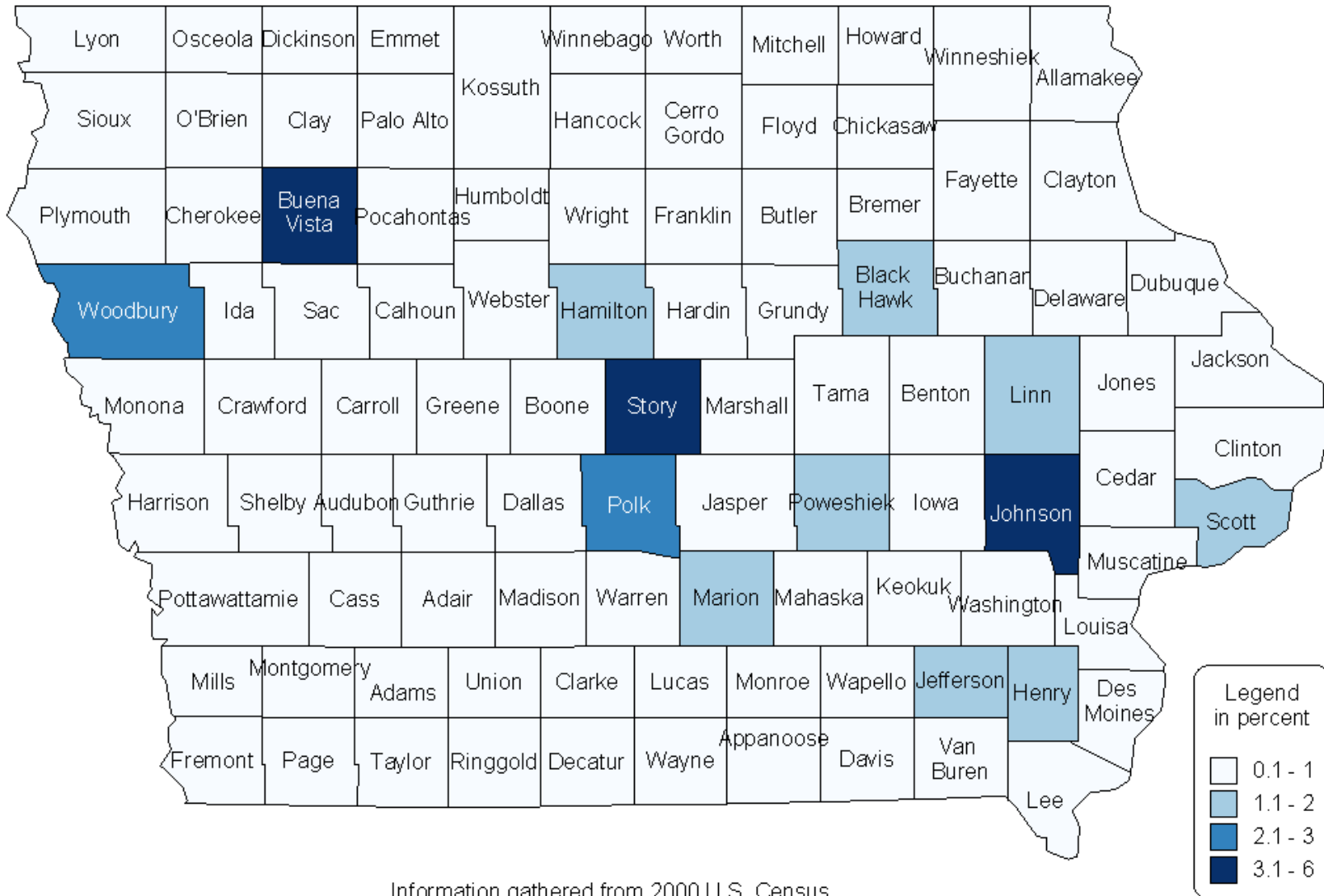
⁴³ Ibid.



Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 16.

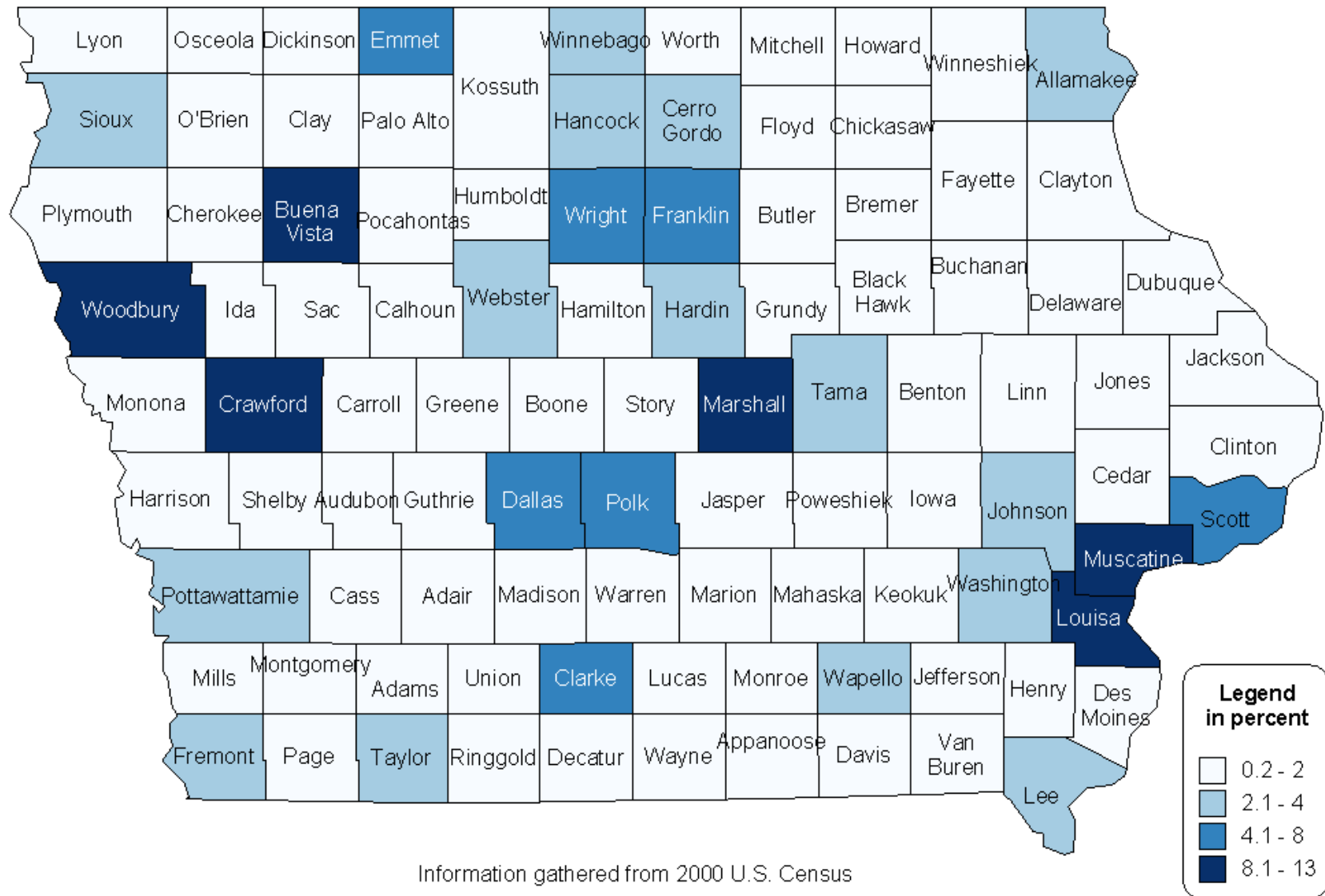
Asian Population as a Percent of Total Population by County



Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 17.

Hispanic Population as a Percent of Total Population by County



Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 18. Photo of an Agriturismo location in northern Veneto region of Italy.



Agritourism, continued

In the United States, agritourism also has been shown to provide income opportunities for farmers. In a survey conducted by the New England Agricultural Statistics Service in 2000, agritourism added \$10.5 million to the incomes of 31 percent of Vermont farms.⁴⁴ A 1998 study measuring the economic impact of agritourism in San Diego County, California found that the value-added economic impact was \$2.4 million, with a total of 69 jobs (part- and full-time)

⁴⁴ "Survey Shows That Agritourism Added \$10.5 million to Vermont Farm Income in 2000". Agriview Newsletter 2001. Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food, and markets. Vol. 65, No.18.

created.⁴⁵ A recent study indicates that New York's agritourism industry consists of 2,087 businesses that brought in an estimated total gross income of \$210 million in 1999.⁴⁶ After deducting businesses expenses, the estimated net profit of these businesses was more than \$25.5 million.⁴⁷

Other states are creating programs that will develop agritourism opportunities. The University of California's Small Farm Center has launched a collaborative agritourism project that includes an agritourism database (<http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/database/>). People can select the county they are interested in visiting and learn about the farms that offer agritourism experiences. The University of Illinois Extension Service in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Tourism also has an agritourism directory which can be found at (<http://www.agritourism.uiuc.edu/NewProfile/default.asp>).

A small number of Iowa's farms offer agritourism opportunities such as corn mazes, petting zoos, hayrides and U-pick fruits or vegetables. Vineyards and wineries are a good example of place-based food enterprises that attract agritourism. Closely clustered vineyards and wineries (creating a wine region) actually hold more agritourism potential for each enterprise in the cluster than when they are widely scattered.

⁴⁵ Lobo, R.E., G.E. Goldman, D.A. Jolly, B.D. Wallace, W.L. Schrader, S.A. Parker 1999. "Agritourism Benefits Agriculture in San Diego County. Viewed at Small Farms Center web site August 2004. <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/agritourSD.html>

⁴⁶Kuehn, Diane, and Duncan Hilchey 2000. "Agritourism in New York: Management and Operations. New York's Sea Grant Extension Program. Web site visited August 2004. <http://www.seagrantsunysb.edu/Pages/FactSheets-PDF/Tourism/Agritourism01.pdf>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Iowa Place-based Foods

Food festivals

Food festivals are a common community-based event in the United States. A listing of community events for rural and urban centers often yields an intriguing assortment of festivals with a specific food theme. Examples include apple, sweet corn, and maple syrup festivals. Figure 19 shows the Iowa county locations of a number of food festivals based on the themes of specific fruits, vegetables, and forest products.⁴⁸ Some of these festivals were started to honor and celebrate the region's site-specific contribution to development of new varieties or commercial production. For example, the apple festival in Peru, Iowa celebrates the discovery by farmer Jesse Hiatt of what has become the Delicious apple.

Iowa is competitive with neighboring states Illinois and Minnesota in the number of sweet corn, strawberry, and apple festivals/days (Table 2). Iowa has more watermelon and melon festivals/days than its neighboring states.

Table 2. Number of Food Festivals by food type and state - 2004

State	Apple	Sweet Corn	Strawberry	Grapes	Watermelon
Illinois	8	9	5	1	2
Minnesota	6	7	0	1	3
Nebraska	2	1	0	0	0
Missouri	5	1	2	1	1
Iowa	5	11	4	0	7

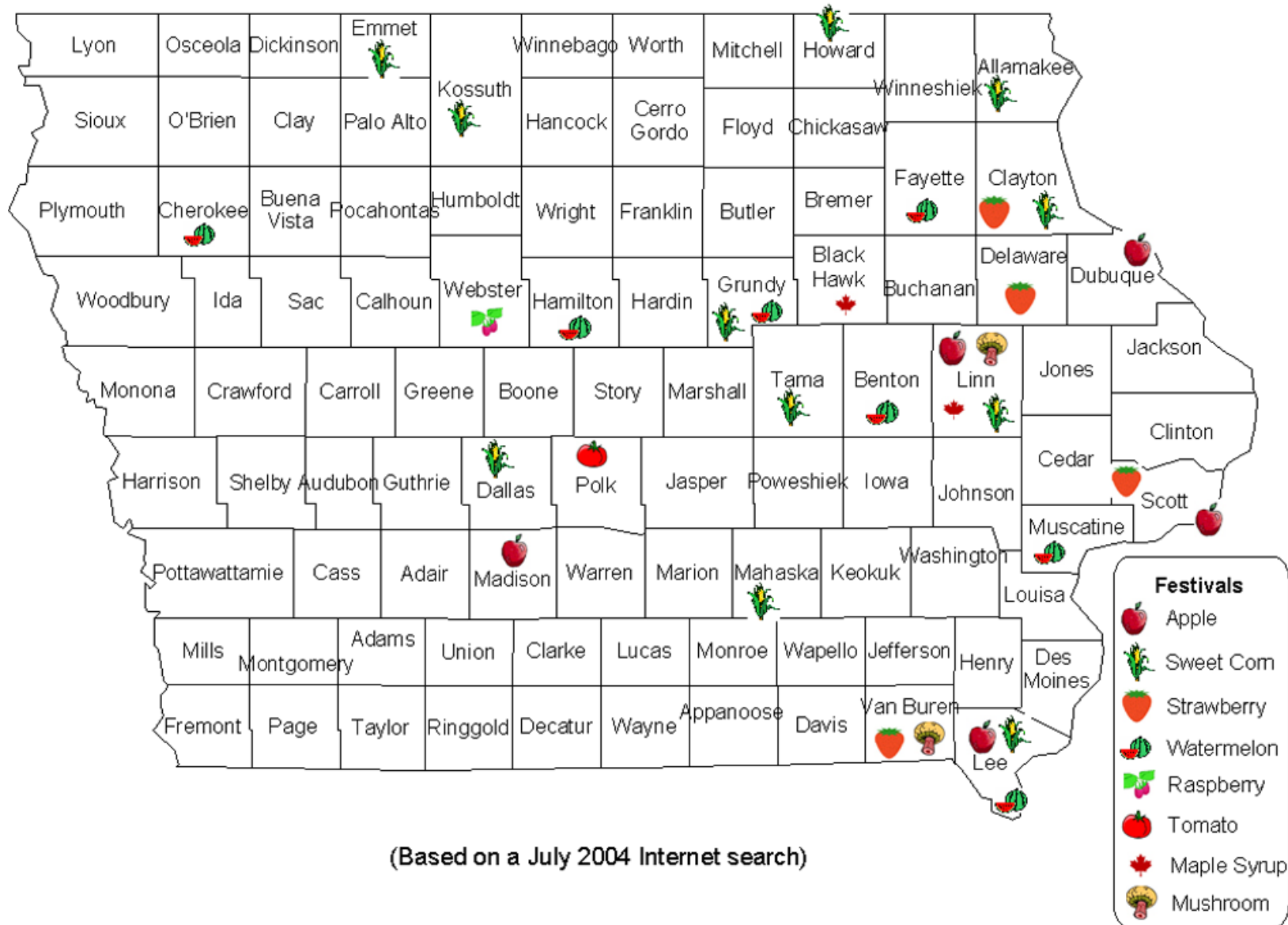
Note: based on Internet search of Chamber of Commerce and tourism web sites for “festivals” and “days” for these particular foods - July and August 2004

⁴⁸ Internet-based search of festivals– July 2004. Iowa also has a number of festivals that are based on a meat such as pork or beef.



Iowa Place-based Foods

Figure 19. Iowa Food Festival Locations for Selected Fruits, Vegetables, and Forest Products



(Based on a July 2004 Internet search)

Iowa Place-based Foods

National and Iowa efforts: Preserving America's food traditions

A new consortium of chefs, researchers, ethnic farmers, Native Americans, and non-profits is partnering to document North America's most unique and distinctive foods.⁴⁹ This consortium, led by the Center for Sustainable Environments at Northern Arizona University and including Slow Food USA, has begun compiling and mapping information regarding the geography of current and historic foods, including certain heirloom or unique cultivated plants that may be near extinction. Iowa has two such cultivated heirloom/native plants on the spring 2004 Food Tradition list; the Hawkeye-Red Delicious apple (native to Madison County, Iowa) and the Pike's Peak squash. (For more information on this initiative, go to www.environment.nau.edu.)

Seed Savers Exchange (SSE) located in Decorah, Iowa is a tremendous local resource for the preservation of heirloom fruit and vegetable varieties. Founded in 1975, SSE members grow and distribute heirloom varieties of vegetables, fruits and grains. Heirloom fruits and vegetables command premium prices when sold at markets or to "white tablecloth" type dining establishments.

Place-based food research and development in other states

With concerns about the homogenization of physical and cultural landscapes, and missed opportunities to promote unique agricultural areas in New York, a team of Cornell University researchers and

educators initiated the Capturing the Essence of Place project in spring 2003.

Project leaders worked with communities to develop a Heritage Harvest Nomination Process based on a set of criteria including palpable identity, lack of previous activities, and organizational capability.⁵⁰ The community selected through this process was the Concord Grape Belt Region, the largest viticultural area outside of California, located along Lake Erie in New York and Pennsylvania. This region is the grape juice capital of the world and has a rich agricultural heritage including Welch's grape juice. A 45-mile long, three-mile wide swath of grapes has been tended by nearly 1,000 growers for more than 100 years. State and possibly national heritage area status is planned, including an interpretive trail, information kiosks, and coordinated commercial and recreation opportunities.

In March 2004, the University of Missouri in partnership with a myriad of state and local organizations launched the Missouri Regional Cuisines project with a pilot project in the area encompassing Ste. Genevieve, Missouri and running south along the Mississippi River to Cape Girardeau. The city of Ste. Genevieve was the first white European settlement west of the Mississippi River. The area has unique soil characteristics and topographical features that favor the development of wines and perhaps other foods characteristic of the region. A project goal is to create labels of origin for wine and other food products originating in the region.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Current members of this consortium includes the Center for Sustainable Environments, Slow Food USA, Seed Savers Exchange, Chefs Collaborative, the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, Native Seeds/SEARCH, and the Cultural Conservancy.

⁵⁰ Presentation made by Duncan Hilchey, Cornell University. Regional Food Summit, Chicago, Illinois. June 30, 2004.

⁵¹ Barham, Elizabeth, 2004. "Missouri Regional Cuisines Project— Report of the Initial Regional Meeting— Mississippi Hills Pilot Region." Ste. Genevieve, Missouri. March 17, 2004. Available at: www.ssu.missouri.edu/Faculty/EBarham/



Iowa Place-based Foods

The Missouri Regional Cuisines project has benefited from an important project, known as the Missouri Classification project, that has classified Missouri's ecological regions. The effort has been working to apply the U.S. Forest Service's national Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units toward the ecological classification of lands in Missouri.⁵² The spatial hierarchy of this system allows users to address resource management issues at local and regional levels and thus can serve as an ecological frame of reference for the Missouri Regional Cuisines project.

Regional and local food systems and the link to place-based foods

Interest in locally-grown foods is growing in Iowa and across the United States. In an Internet-based consumer study conducted by the Leopold Center and the ISU Business Analysis Lab in November 2003, more than 55 percent of those surveyed were interested in learning more about how and where their food was produced.⁵³ Of those Iowans participating in the study, approximately 15 percent reported that they were willing to pay 30 percent or more for local food products that were raised by family farmers in an environmentally friendly manner.⁵⁴

Local foods may be the original food with geographic indications, but whether these systems provide economic opportunities for a handful or several thousand farmers in a region depends in large part on the farming area's proximity to urban and suburban centers. Place-based foods with some level of identity protection, such as a

certification mark, have the potential to be marketed at a premium outside of the local area, increasing economic opportunities for farmers regardless of their nearness to urban centers. Place-based foods also may contribute to the agritourism potential for a region as consumers come back to a specific area to experience the uniqueness of both the food and the place.

The Iowa-based Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) was initiated in fall 2003 as part of the Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture (VCPSA) project.⁵⁵ The guiding objective for the Regional Food Systems Working Group is to research and document the economic, environmental, and community impacts of local and regional food systems.

The RFSWG uses this definition of a regional food system:

A regional food system supports long-term connections between farmers and consumers while helping to meet the health, social, economic, and environmental needs of the communities within that region. Producers and markets are linked via efficient infrastructures that:

- ◆ Promote environmental health;
- ◆ Provide competitive advantages to producers, processors and retailers;
- ◆ Encourage identification with the region's culture, history, and ecology; and
- ◆ Share risks and rewards equitably among all partners in the system.

⁵² Missouri Ecological Classification Project web page. Visited August 2004. www.cerc.cr.usgs.gov/morap/

⁵³ Pirog, Richard, ed. 2004. "Ecolabel Value Assessment Phase II: Consumer Perceptions of Local Foods." Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵ For more information on the Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture project, go to www.valuechains.org.

Iowa Place-based Foods

Another distinction between local and regional food systems made by the RFSWG is that local systems are usually direct farmer to consumer relationships, while farmers in a regional food system are just as likely to have another entity market the product. The RFSWG group has begun its exploration of place-based Iowa foods with a case study of the Muscatine melon (funded by the Leopold Center's Marketing and Food Systems Initiative) that will be completed in fall 2004. Additional case studies of place-based Iowa foods will follow.



Conclusion

The development of regionally based food products and GIs (Geographic Indications) in the European Union highlights a move away from a commodity-based agriculture toward a quality-based system with highly differentiated products that take advantage of the ecology and tradition of the specific region. These products cannot be grown elsewhere and labeled with the same name. GIs offer European consumers high-quality products with a unique story, and offer farmers a potential alternative to expansion as the only avenue to remain profitable through farming.

GIs have not been without challenges for European farmers. Consumer familiarity and understanding of GI classifications has been slower to achieve than anticipated; with less than a majority understanding that a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) signifies the product comes from a well defined region.⁵⁶ There also are reports of GI abuse where consumers are sold food products that were not grown or processed in the region identified with the food product. These marketplace abuses increase the legal fees of farmers, decrease their market opportunities, and undermine consumer confidence. In spite of these challenges, most European farmers view GIs as an important strategy to maintain profitability, product quality, and food tradition.

Iowa has a unique food history that has been heavily influenced by the state's ecology and the culture and traditions of its inhabitants. The perception of Iowa as a farm state by urban residents across the United States offers a competitive advantage in the development of place-based food brands linked to agritourism opportunities.

⁵⁶ Barjole, D. and B. Sylvander. 2000. "Some Factors of Success for "Origin Labeled Products" in *Agri-Food Supply Chains in Europe: Market, Internal Resources and Institutions*.

Although American consumers value local foods, it is unclear which traits of place-based foods they value the most, and how they would perceive such foods among the confusing array of other differentiated foods already in the market.

Study highlights uniqueness of Iowa's diverse foods and traditions

This paper *should not* be viewed as a call for Iowa to return to its agricultural heritage and compete with other states in producing an array of commodity-type foodstuffs when other states have competitive advantage for those products. Rather, the study of the integration of this food history, ecology, and culture can teach valuable lessons about what is unique and different in Iowa, and perhaps shed some light on how we can capitalize on those differences in the marketplace with a focus on place-based foods linked to agritourism and economic development.

Iowa's diverse food history and cultural traditions need further investigation in order to determine the state's potential for promoting place-based foods. One starting place for development of place-based foods in Iowa may be the grape and wine industry, in part because of the widespread acceptance that geographical origin of the grapes has an impact on the quality and taste of wines. The Missouri Regional Cuisines project has chosen grapes and wines as the initial focus of their pilot project for this reason. As noted earlier in this paper, one prominent Iowa winemaker predicts that it will take 15 to 20 years to develop Iowa wines that have true regional identity.

Conclusion, continued

Other states such as New York and Missouri see the combination of place-based foods and agritourism as an important ingredient in the recipe for economic development in rural communities. Given its national perception as a rural agricultural state and a leader in alternative/sustainable agriculture, Iowa needs to explore this opportunity further as an option to increase economic development for its rural communities. The following section offers several recommendations to further research the potential of place-based foods in Iowa.

Recommendations for Action

These actions recommend further research and exploration of the economic and community potential of place-based and traditional foods in Iowa:

- ◆ Research and document Iowa's food production history of unique and highly differentiated food products, including food folklore and traditions.
- ◆ Use maps of Iowa's soils, geology, land cover, and food history to develop a detailed map that would integrate Iowa's distinct ecological regions with its geographic food history.
- ◆ Conduct (or gather existing) case studies on the economic costs and benefits of U.S. food products that have certification marks.
- ◆ Conduct consumer-based market research on which geographic-based traits are most likely to appeal to Iowa and Midwestern consumers.

- ◆ Research the link between place-based foods and agritourism and how the two can function symbiotically to increase economic development of Iowa's rural communities.
- ◆ Invite personnel from several regional and heritage food projects in the United States to visit Iowa and share information about how they developed and implemented their work.
- ◆ Encourage the Iowa grape and wine industry to discuss how best to develop AVAs within the state and in collaboration with neighboring states.
- ◆ Research and develop strategies to overcome the policy-related challenges to encourage production of place-based foods in Iowa, the Upper Midwest, and the United States.
- ◆ Based on research described above, the state of Iowa should allocate funds to develop an appropriate place-based foods program linked to agritourism and economic development that will support Iowa's farmers and rural communities.

