




**A Tool for Focusing Action, Measuring Progress and Celebrating Success**







**“There has never been a better time to go into farming.”**


**That is what Paul Mock**, a well established hydroponic farmer in Morgan County, told an audience of more than 300 people during his plenary speech at the 2012 West Virginia Small Farm Conference in Morgantown, WV. Though it may be surprising news at a time when America is losing farmers nationwide, more and more West Virginia farmers — and agricultural experts — are starting to say the same thing.

The “buy local” trend among both individual consumers and volume buyers is growing sharply. In 2012, food and agriculture businesses in West Virginia have found themselves at a critical and exciting time of opportunity:

- One survey by the Collaborative for a 21st Century Appalachia<sup>1</sup> and the WV Small Farm Center showed that from 2006 to 2008, **West Virginia restaurants and hotels increased purchases of local products by 360%.**
- In the 2012-2013 school year, the West Virginia Department of Education committed **\$250,000 in school food funds** for local purchases.
- **Over a dozen county school systems** reported buying directly from West Virginia farms in 2012, and four of these began buying locally since September 2011.
- The Martinsburg VA Medical Center sees **fresh, healthy meals as an ingredient of recovery** for their patients, and has spent over \$23,000 on local food.

Meanwhile, farmers across the state are discovering the benefits of marketing directly to consumers, of high-value specialty agriculture, and of customizing their growing to meet the demands of buyers. Current Census of Agriculture data shows that from 2002 to 2007, 39% more West Virginia farmers began selling directly to consumers, and **the dollar amount of direct-to-consumer sales increased by 55%.**<sup>2</sup> This means that farmers are capturing a greater portion of the consumer food dollar by marketing products as directly as possible from farm to table. As demand grows, new business models are also emerging to provide the kinds of processing, aggregation and distribution required to meet the needs of sophisticated buyers.

**This growth create jobs for farmers, and also for other parts of the state’s economy.** One recent study by Downstream Strategies, LLC and West Virginia University showed that if West Virginia farmers grew enough produce to meet the in-season fresh produce needs of all state residents, the shift would generate 1,723 new jobs and would result in about \$190 million being retained in the state instead of flowing beyond its borders.<sup>3</sup> Increased local sales of West Virginia products also creates the need for businesses that collect, process and distribute local food, which creates more local jobs. For example, one Iowa study found **that every 1,000 cattle sent to small meat processing facilities supported 7.4 processing jobs.**<sup>4</sup>



**I’ve worked with and for farmers for 40 years. I’m a farmer myself. And I’ve never been more excited about the future of agriculture. There’s never been more technology to make us successful. We can capture way more of the local demand than we’ve ever dreamed possible.”**

—Tom McConnell, WV Small Farm Center at WVU Extension Service

These developments create great possibility for our food and agriculture economy, but also come with complications and risks that could mean the end of the local food “movement” if they are not overcome. Seizing the local food opportunity requires more than just training or technical assistance — it requires strategic collaborations across multiple sectors, and a rich public conversation on the real opportunities and barriers in West Virginia’s food system. Fortunately, that conversation has begun.





## Introducing the Road Map for the Food Economy

West Virginia's Road Map for the Food Economy is a statewide "food charter" designed to help us all focus, measure and celebrate our collective progress towards stronger local food systems. The Road Map offers a vision for West Virginia's local food economy and provides ways of measuring how statewide and local policies, programs, and community efforts are contributing to the strength of that food economy.

Outlined in the following pages, the Road Map contains two parts: an action plan for building a food and farm economy over the next five years, and a "Food Economy Score Card" which allows us to measure collective progress towards the big-picture goals of the action plan. Starting in 2013, the Food Economy Score Card will be updated annually, and progress in achieving the goals and actions of the Road Map will be celebrated in an annual report.

### Who Wrote the Road Map?

The Road Map for the Food Economy is based on a series of public conversations about how West Virginians from all geographic areas and walks of life would like to see West Virginia's local food economy grow and improve.

Altogether, **over 310 people participated**, including farmers, teachers, food service staff, economic developers, restaurant owners, lenders, food assistance organizations, and many others. The conversations were convened by the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition with key partners including West Virginia University Extension Service and its Small Farm Center, the Office of Child Nutrition and Office of Career and Technical Instruction at the WV Department of Education and its Agriculture Education program, the WV Office of Healthy Lifestyles, a multi-university partnership called the Appalachian Foodshed Project, and many other local and statewide groups. Core funding was provided by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, with contributions from a variety of other sponsors. (A full list of partners and sponsors can be found later in this document). The charter was developed through a series of participatory steps:



Photo courtesy of Manna Meal, whose community garden grows quantities of fresh healthy food for its soup kitchen in Charleston, WV



- During April-May 2011, **six Regional Roundtables on West Virginia Food and Farms** were completed in Wheeling, Hico, Parkersburg, Berkeley Springs, Philippi, and Charleston. Over 233 people participated. The goals of the roundtables were (1) to get people talking and learning about issues involved in bringing local food from farm to table, and (2) to brainstorm action items that could be implemented to build the food and farm economy. Summaries of the roundtables can be read at <http://www.wvhub.org/wvffc/west-virginia-food-charter>.



- In January 2012, the Road Map for the Food Economy convening engaged 120 individuals in day-long action planning sessions on four key food system issues: Viability of Food and Farm Businesses, Farm-to-Institution and Institutional Food, Youth and the Next Generation of Farmers, and Improving Access to Healthy Local Food. The Road Map established broad goals for the food economy and expanded on the action recommendations from the Regional Roundtables.
- From January 2012 to June 2012, stakeholder-based Working Groups met to begin tackling some of the individual actions identified in the draft action plan from the Road Map for the Food Economy convening. The action priorities identified by the Working Groups were used to add detail to the Road Map.
- Additional feedback was collected from a plenary session at the WV Small Farm Conference, where over 50 attendees voted on top priority items in the draft Road Map, and from a statewide training of Agriculture Education teachers, who provided feedback on what was needed to grow a new generation of WV farmers.



Photo courtesy of Manna Meal, Inc.

Input from these many venues was gathered together and incorporated into the action plan framework developed at the Road Map for the Food Economy convening.

## Who will accomplish the goals of the Road Map?




The Road Map is offered as a tool for understanding key opportunities in West Virginia's food and farm economy, and how these opportunities can be seized through both policy and practice. **The Road Map is for everyone** — we encourage you to think about you can help implement it your own community. Local government, citizens groups, policy makers, farmer groups, foundations, agencies, economic developers and other concerned groups are invited to adopt or adapt the Road Map as a guide to form an action plan for their own efforts.

The West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition has begun supporting several Food and Farm Working Groups as they tackle specific action items in the Road Map. These Working Groups are the seeds of an opportunity for passionate, knowledgeable people to help find solutions that benefit our local food and farm economy. They are comprised of direct stakeholders in the food economy, such as farmers, co-op managers, market managers, emergency food assistance providers, educators, health care practitioners and Extension agents.

Each group is chaired by an individual deeply engaged in his or her Working Group topic, and the groups are driven by the group members and the needs those members have observed. More information is on page 11, and an update on the activities of the Working Groups will be included the Road Map for the Food Economy Annual Report, which will be released in early 2013.







## The Road Map is a tool for understanding opportunities.

### How will we know if we are making progress?

One important aspect of the Road Map for the Food Economy is that it provides ways to measure the West Virginia's progress towards a stronger food and farm economy. In the upcoming years, we plan to publish an annual report on the state's progress through the goals of the Road Map. Progress will be measured in two ways:

- First, we will **track short-term progress in completing the action items** of Road Map. We will do this by releasing a Road Map for the Food Economy Annual Report, which will celebrate the achievements of the Working Groups and of other groups that are moving forward on the action items. Progress will be measured through specific achievements such as the number of farmers participating in new aggregated sales platforms, the number of meat processor directories distributed to farmers, or the number of teachers trained to teach classes on value-added food production.
- Second, we will **track whether we are achieving our big-picture goals**, using real-world data to measure changes in West Virginia's food and farm economy over time. By looking at trends in this data, we will be able to celebrate areas where we are improving and pay special attention to areas where the situation is getting worse. Trends are summarized in the Food Economy Scorecard (see page 8).

The Road Map is a living, changing document that will be updated and expanded over time, as as goals and objectives are met and new issues are identified.

### How can I get involved?

To help move West Virginia down the road to a stronger food and farm economy, you can:

- **Adopt the Road Map for the Food Economy charter:** encourage your local government, citizens group, legislators, farmer organization, community foundation, economic developers or other concerned agencies to sign on at [www.wvhub.org/wvffc/west-virginia-food-charter](http://www.wvhub.org/wvffc/west-virginia-food-charter).
- **Stay connected** to statewide organizing efforts through the West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition by signing up for our newsletter at [www.wvhub.org/wvffc/get-connected](http://www.wvhub.org/wvffc/get-connected), and by attending statewide events hosted by other groups — such as the West Virginia Small Farm Conference, hosted by WVU Extension Service and its West Virginia Small Farm Center.
- **Buy Local:** set a goal for how much your family, business or agency will spend on local food. At home, consider buying at least \$10 worth of locally produced food per week. At work, consider sourcing at least \$500 worth of local food for events and meetings each year.
- **Find simple ways to work on the Road Map's action items** within your own community. Tell your school superintendant about the importance of Agriculture Education, let a farmer know about farm to school opportunities, or help start a nutrition education class at your local farmers market. If you are part of a civic organization, help that organization choose an action item to work on this year. Find examples of successful community food projects at [www.wvhub.org/wvffc](http://www.wvhub.org/wvffc).



Photo courtesy of Manna Meal, Inc.



## Action Plan

The following are the critical goals, changes and activities identified by more than 300 stakeholders across the state of West Virginia:

### Goal 1: Youth and new farmers participate in the agricultural economy.

#### Change Needed #1:

Increase basic understanding of the agricultural economy for young farmers, consumers, and support networks.

#### Next Steps:

1. Increase professional training for teachers in value-adding, sustainability, marketing, and entrepreneurship.
2. Create a multiagency working group to look at how to integrate agriculture into K-12 curricula while meeting Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs).
3. Increase agriculture literacy in K-12 grade levels by using agriculture to teach STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) subjects and allowing agriculture classes to count as science credits.
4. Change school policies to allow more time for field trips to farms and related facilities.



Photo courtesy of Melissa Stewart of West Virginia State University Extension Service, whose Junior Master Gardener program uses garden-themed activities to teach children science, reading and other skills

#### Change Needed #2:

Increase support to young agri-preneurs.

#### Next Steps:

1. Identify farmers interested in a mentorship relationship with beginning farmers and agriculture students, and enable mentorship opportunities.
2. Establish programs to link young farmers with older, established farmers in a profit-sharing or co-op model
3. Create new farmer training programs; promote existing programs such as FFA, 4H, Extension Services and Farm Credit; and enhance agri-preneurship collaborations among these programs.
4. Provide training and professional development to increase and improve beginning farmer education, including business planning and financial analysis, farm incubator opportunities, and entrepreneurship training initiatives.
5. Promote use of students' farm products in school cafeterias, addressing liability and logistical considerations associated with this.
6. Increase availability of certificate and Associate Degree programs in Agriculture at the Community and Technical College Level.

#### How will we know if we are successful?

Big-picture success in this area may be measured by:

- Average age of farmers
- Number of farms
- Job placement of high school ag. program graduates in agricultural fields
- Participation in FFA and 4H programs





## Goal 2: Institutions and schools buy local healthy foods.

### Change Needed #1:

Simplify process of purchasing local food for institutions.

#### Next Steps:

1. Increase growers' familiarity with the process of selling to institutions and decrease the amount of time and paperwork it currently requires.
2. Enable more "local" authority and decision making regarding food purchasing decisions.
3. Increase training and resources for growers to ensure that their processes match the requirements of the purchasers.
4. Continue using the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program for pilot projects offering local produce snacks in eligible elementary schools

### Change Needed #2:

Decrease bureaucratic roadblocks to purchasing local foods.

#### Next Steps:

1. Create easy-to-use "step by step" guides, specific to various types of institutions, to explain each institution's processes for purchasing food.
2. Document the benefits of successful farm to institution programs, including the economic impacts of local food purchases, measurable successes in reducing diet-related diseases, and income generated through increased numbers of cafeteria eaters.
3. Inventory how existing rules and regulations at the policy level impede or enable local food purchasing, and improve these as needed to encourage purchasing of local food.
4. Review purchasing-related policies and practices with food service employees to ensure that they are applied consistently across counties, agencies, and companies.

### Change Needed #3:

Increase communication between suppliers of local food (including farmers, distributors, and aggregators) and institutions.

#### Next Steps:

1. Inventory existing resources and networks to determine what information on farm-to-institution buying and selling opportunities is currently available, how buyers and producers can access this information, and how often the available information is used.
2. Promote supplier-buyer platforms, including online ordering platforms, to ease communication.
3. Identify distributors and aggregation sites that are willing serve as the liaison between buyers and local producers, and increase the number of aggregation sites where needed.
4. Encourage institutional food service to partner with producers on marketing their local food buying programs to customers



### How will we know if we are successful?

Big-picture success in this area may be measured by:

- Number of schools purchasing locally
- Number of hospitals purchasing locally
- Number of assisted living facilities purchasing locally





## Goal 3: The public consumes healthy local food at a household level.

### Change needed #1:

Increase state economic incentives for local farmers and local food.

#### Next Steps:

1. Create a robust, state-supported media campaign for local agriculture.
2. Introduce tax breaks for growing and retailing local foods, including tax incentives encouraging grocery stores to carry local foods or to offer a "local" section.
3. Develop networks, tools and talking points to help producers, consumers and grassroots groups advocate for healthy local food.

### Change needed #2:

Increase exposure of consumers to fresh, local food.

#### Next Steps:

1. Create and encourage more hands-on (and mouths-on) education and events.
2. Provide agencies and organizations with information on how to access healthy local food, encouraging them pass this information on to their clients and to incorporate healthy local food into their own events or programs.
3. Educate low-income individuals about how to select and prepare healthy foods.
4. Use school gardens to educate students about the value of eating healthy local food, integrating these gardens into curricula for a range of subjects including reading, writing, health, science and physical education classes.

### Change needed #3:

Increase the ease and affordability of local food for consumers. (This includes reducing the costs to farmers of producing food and moving it to consumers.)

#### Next Steps:

1. Promote the opportunity for customers to use food assistance benefits, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, WIC benefits and Senior Coupons, to purchase local food.
2. Encourage year-round farmers markets that provide an outlet for producers of all scales, featuring extended hours, a central cashier, refrigeration, and centralized kitchen facilities that can also be used for education purposes.
3. Create a state-wide resource guide on how to access trainings, grants and other opportunities that can help make healthy local food more affordable and accessible.

### How will we know if we are successful?

Big-picture success in this area may be measured by:

- Number of farms making direct sales
- Total value of direct sales by farms
- Household food insecurity
- Obesity rates
- Diabetes rates





## Goal 4: Local farmers increase their income and are profitable.

### Change needed #1:

Increase cooperation among producers.

#### Next Steps:

1. Increase working knowledge and education about how to build strong, sustainable farmer cooperatives and farmers markets.
2. Build farmer-to-farmer networks and forums encouraging cooperation among farmer-driven entities (such as farmers markets).
3. Update the West Virginia Cooperative Statutes that govern the activities and legal structure of cooperatives.
4. Create a statewide insurance group providing farmers with health coverage.

### Change needed #2:

Increase business literacy regarding food and farm businesses.

#### Next Steps:

1. Educate professionals and decision-makers, including lawyers, insurance agents, agricultural service providers, banks, chamber of commerce, small business service providers and legislators, about the nature and importance of specialty agriculture.
2. Create a train-the-trainer program for food and farm businesses through the extension services.
3. Increase local delivery of business training to farmers through tools such as online training, mentor networks, or a food/farm business literacy "Boot Camp."



Photo courtesy of Wesley Davis, a young farmer whose high school Agriculture Education class project became a thriving egg business selling to Mason County Schools.

### Change needed #3:

Increase the ability of producers to access and utilize affordable processing and distribution infrastructure.

#### Next Steps:

1. Create and publicize a complete directory of existing food processing facilities, especially meat processors, and what services they offer to local producers.
2. Clarify which processing regulations producers and processors must meet in order to sell through various types of direct marketing outlets.
3. Identify and work with distributors that are willing to partner with local farmers.

### Change needed #4:

Increase the number and type of local food marketing outlets and opportunities.

#### Next Steps:

1. Reduce "barriers to entry" by addressing zoning, health department policies, and legislation that affect vendors or producers of local food.
2. Enable aggregation and distribution hubs for wholesalers.
3. Host expos for the marketing of small farm products.

### How will we know if we are successful?

Big-picture success in this area may be measured by:

- Market value of agricultural products sold
- Value of average sales per farm
- Number of farms where farming is principle operator's primary occupation





## From Plan to Action: Food & Farm Working Groups



Photo courtesy of Sarah Gorin, taken at Fish Hawk Acres' 2010 Hootenanny. Fish Hawk Acres brings together foods from multiple WV farms and markets them through mail-order, catering, special events and more.

At the Road Map for the Food Economy event in January 2012, some participants joined Working Groups to work on particular food and farm issues that appear in the Road Map for the Food Economy charter. These Working Groups offer of an opportunity for passionate, knowledgeable people to help find solutions that benefit our local food and farm economy. They are comprised of direct stakeholders in the food economy, such as farmers, co-op managers, market managers, emergency food assistance providers, educators, and Extension agents.

Each group is chaired by someone deeply engaged in his or her Working Group topic, and the groups' agendas are driven by their members. **While many different agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals must play their own part in achieving the goals of the Road Map, the Working Groups are one tool for tackling issues that are too complex for an individual person, organization or agency to solve alone.**

There are currently four Working Groups which have been provided with seed funding from the Food & Farm Coalition to work through issues identified in the Road Map. Each group has chosen to work on a six-month practical project that addresses a pressing, high-priority opportunity (or need) identified by its members. The projects to date have been practical in nature, but in 2013 the Working Groups will also identify and present statewide policy opportunities that have become evident in their work.

The Working Groups are currently working on four issue areas:

- **Processing Infrastructure:** This group is working with state and federal agencies to provide a list of all state and federal meat processing plants in West Virginia, with detailed information about the services they provide. The group is also working on a farmer guide to requirements for selling and processing meat for different markets, and a survey on the needs of West Virginia meat processors.
- **Aggregation and Distribution:** This group is laying the groundwork for development of new aggregation and distribution connections in the state by touring successful models such as Monroe Farm Market (in June 2012), creating a supportive learning community among new aggregators, and developing a common vocabulary on aggregation and distribution.
- **The Next Generation of Farmers:** Focused primarily on elementary school and middle school gardens, this group is working to match the complete calendar year of gardening activities with popular school garden curricula, Extension resources on gardening, and West Virginia Content Standards and Objectives. This information will be made available for use by teachers.
- **Improving Access to Healthy Local Food:** This group is spearheading a small pilot program, supported by BB&T and the Bernard McDonough Foundation, to test the effectiveness of various outreach strategies in attracting SNAP (Food Stamp) customers at farmers markets.



Photo courtesy of Frank Abruzzino of Hawthorne Valley Farm in Clarksburg, a local producer offering grass-fed beef and other products.



The WV Food & Farm Coalition has supported the Working Groups by providing project planning assistance, conference calling and online forums, an honorarium for the chair of each Working Group, funding for Working Group related travel and meetings, and the opportunity to apply for mini-grants of up to \$1,500 per group to complete their chosen project.

As the Working Groups complete their first set of projects by October 2012, they will revisit the goals of the Road Map to help them determine what to work on next. New Working Groups will also have the opportunity to form around the other activities in the Road Map. The accomplishments and findings of the Working Groups will be reported annually in the Road Map for the Food Economy annual update.



## West Virginia Food Economy Score Card



One important aspect of the “Road Map for the Food Economy” action plan is that it allows our collective progress to be measured. By tracking changes in real-world food and farm data over time, we will be able to celebrate areas where we are improving and to pay special attention to problem areas.

The following document is a West Virginia food system “score card” that measures the state of the West Virginia food and farm economy. The data in this document will be updated annually in order to track how the food economy is changing, and whether we are drawing closer to meeting the goals of the Road Map.

With guidance from the West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition, Downstream Strategies, LLC drew on the following resources to create this template:

- **Informal surveys** of over a dozen state and regional food systems projects from across the U.S. about how they use, or propose to use, data to track the success of their food and farm economies;
- **Feedback from attendees** at the first “Road Map for the Food Economy” summit regarding how to track successes under each goal; and
- **Scans of available food and farm data** to determine which data sources are updated frequently, are reliably accurate, and will continue to be available over time.

Based on this research, measurable indicators were chosen for the “score card” to match each goal. The research team then assessed the current “state of the state” by looking up baseline data for each indicator as of spring 2012. By giving us a snapshot of the West Virginia food system in 2012, this document provides a basis for comparison in future years. Having good baseline data, and data that we know we can update regularly, prepares us to answer the questions: “How will we know when our efforts have been successful?” and “How do we know whether our current approach is actually making a difference?”





## West Virginia Food Economy Score Card: 2012 Trends At A Glance

This chart will be updated and published annually using the best, most recently available data.

GOAL		INDICATOR OF PROGRESS	GETTING BETTER (+) OR WORSE (-)	CURRENT RATE OF CHANGE
<b>Goal 1: Youth and new farmers are participating in the agricultural economy.</b>	1.1	Average age of farmers <sup>†</sup>	—	3% older
	1.2	Number of farms*	—	1% fewer
	1.3	Job placement of high school ag. program graduates in agricultural fields*	+	7% higher
	1.4	Participation in FFA*	—	4% lower
<b>Goal 2: Institutions and schools buy healthy local food.</b>	2.1	Number of schools purchasing local*	+	700% higher
<b>Goal 3: The public consumes healthy local food at a household level.</b>	3.1	Farms making direct sales <sup>†</sup>	+	39% more
	3.2	Total value of direct sales <sup>†</sup>	+	55% more
	3.3	Household food insecurity**	—	32% higher
	3.4	Obesity rate*	—	4% higher
	3.5	Diabetes rate*	—	3% higher
<b>Goal 4: Local farmers increase their income and are profitable.</b>	4.1	Market value of ag. products sold <sup>†</sup>	+	23% higher
	4.2	Value of average sales per farm <sup>†</sup>	+	9% higher
	4.3	Number of farms where farming is operator's primary occupation <sup>†</sup>	—	7% fewer

■ Getting Better ■ Getting Worse

\* Data updated annually

\*\* Data updated every three years

† Census of Agriculture data updated every five years  
(data shown here is from 2002 to 2007)

For complete citations and data, see Appendices posted at  
<http://www.wvhub.org/wvffc/west-virginia-food-charter>

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The following partners have contributed to the development of the Road Map for the Food Economy:

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- West Virginia University Extension Service and its WV Small Farm Center
- WV Department of Education – Office of Child Nutrition
- WV Department of Education – Office of Career and Technical Instruction
- West Virginia Department of Agriculture
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- West Virginia State University
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- West Virginia Community Development Hub

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- Panorama at the Peak – Farm Fresh Dining with a View
- JM Catering
- Northern Community and Technical College – Culinary Program
- Kanawha County WVU Extension Service
- Philip Barbour High School FFA

For more information, visit [www.wvhub.org/wvffc/west-virginia-food-charter](http://www.wvhub.org/wvffc/west-virginia-food-charter) or contact Savanna Lyons, Program Director of the West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition, at [s.lyons@wvhub.org](mailto:s.lyons@wvhub.org) or (304) 673-0053.

The West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition is an initiative of the West Virginia Community Development Hub. Launched in 2010, the mission of the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition is to *build, support and strengthen a statewide network of those involved in West Virginia's local food economies, with the interconnected goals of improving access to healthy, locally-produced food for all West Virginians and helping viable food and farm businesses to grow.*

Read more at [www.wvhub.org/wvffc](http://www.wvhub.org/wvffc).







Photo courtesy of Frank Abruzzino, Hawthorne Valley Farm

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