

Keeping It Local: Food Systems As Economic Stabilizers

SWREDA



July 27, 2017

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Agenda

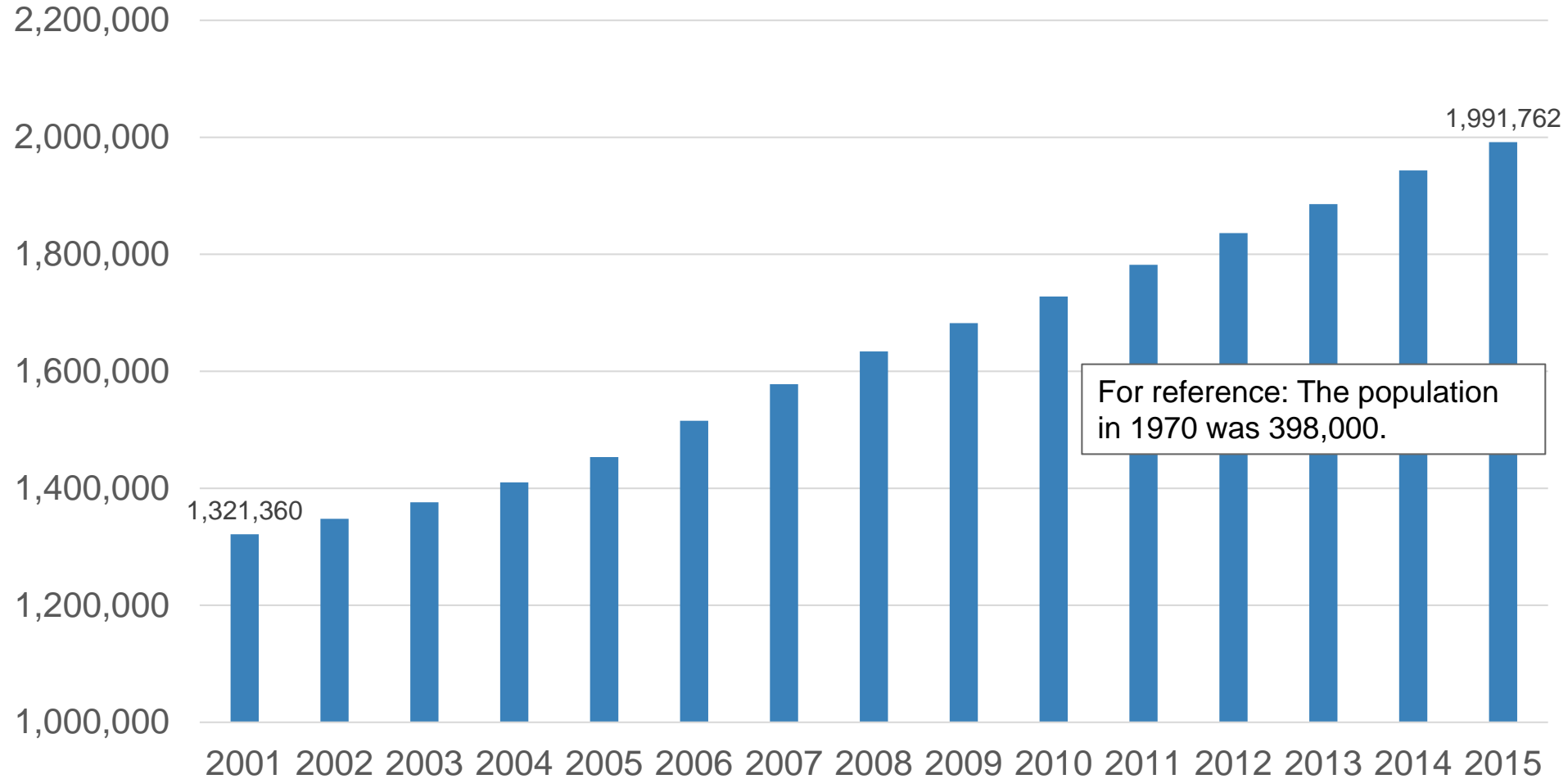
- ▷ The rationale behind supporting local food
- ▷ Let's try this: the CAPCOG story
- ▷ Some lessons learned

1.

Local Food Makes Economic Sense

A Growing Population

Population in the Austin-RR MSA



Source: EMSI

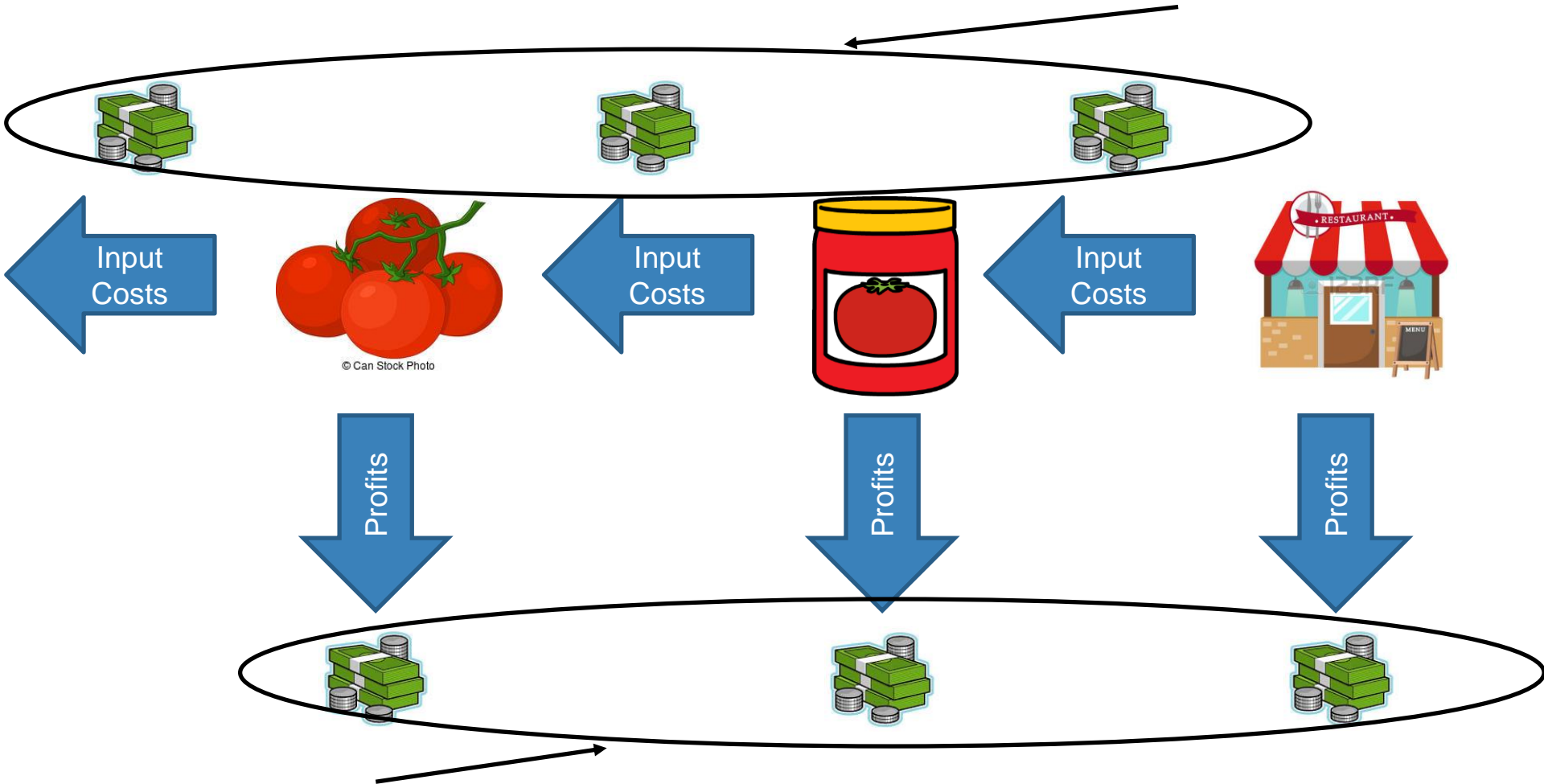
Things to Know About Texans

- ▷ Lots of us have crowded into the Austin area now
- ▷ We all eat food
- ▷ We will pay money for that food
- ▷ Hungry Texans are, therefore, an economic opportunity
- ▷ We do not share grills, apparently



Why Local? Consider a Supply Chain...

Local input costs = Local jobs



Local profits = Local reinvestment & spending

Local Food Is Economic Development

Lockhart attracts over 1 million visitors per year with BBQ.

This is tourism, but it's also place-building.



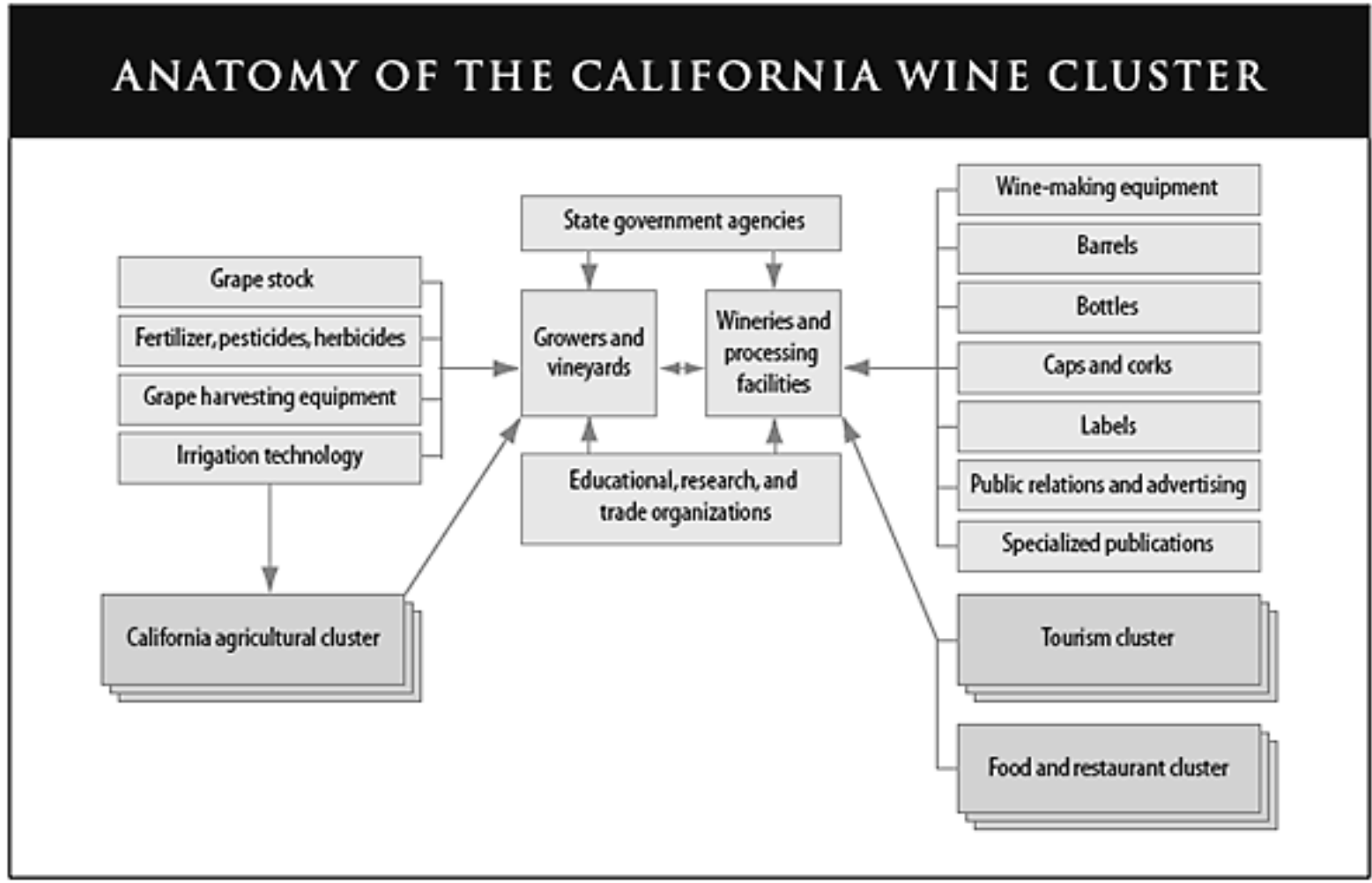
But Retail Is Only Part of the Picture

Local Food Employment in the Austin MSA

	Employment	Average Annual Wages
Local Food System (924)	118,582	\$23,162
Local Food System - Nonretail (925)	6,158	\$43,293

Source: JobsEQ

But Retail Is Only Part of the Picture



Source: Michael Porter, Harvard Business Review

2.

So, What Works?

(This presentation will not answer this question)

Consultants & Industry Cluster Approach

What Did We Do?

- Hired a consultant to examine the local food cluster, identify gaps, articulate opportunities

What Happened?

- We got a summary of food-related employment and output data for the region

Good Outcomes

- Sparked further interest in local food among regional jurisdictions
- Eventually fed into [The Economic Impact of Austin's Food Sector](#)

Not So Good Outcomes

- Analysis followed the NAICS data structure, so actually tracing supply chains was difficult
- Focused more on food retail (local spending on food)

Grant Application for Food System Study

What Did We Do?

- Worked with City of Austin and City of Elgin on Regional Food System Study Proposal

What Happened?

- Difficult to find funding source that was well-aligned with system-wide study

Good Outcomes

- City of Elgin awarded Food Link grant

Not So Good Outcomes

- Project folded into other efforts

Grassroots Food System Study

What Did We Do?

- Worked with the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Board (and stakeholders) to advocate for a regional food system study

What Happened?

- Scope creep, no-single point of contact for communication, a crowded funding request environment

Good Outcomes

- Regional Food Summit
- Strengthened connections between food system stakeholders

Not So Good Outcomes

- Study not funded

Foundation-Funded Mini Study

What Did We Do?

- Break regional food system study into component parts and identify a funder interested in smaller portion of the work

What Happened?

- Funded for a small study on demand for locally produced vegetables

Good Outcomes

- Progress!

Not So Good Outcomes

- Had to settle for smaller scope

3.

So, What Have We
Learned?

Lessons Learned

- Data on agriculture is spotty at best. Really useful analysis may require new data collection
- A lot of challenges relate to distribution, but food hubs, co-packers, shared spaces don't solve all challenges
- Linking institutional buyers to local food may be easiest place to start
- Farmers don't really want to spend all their time at Farmers' Markets
- Food entrepreneurship mentorship and resources are critical for startups
- Ushering a project like this through local funding process requires substantial time commitment

Thanks!

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