



WMFPA Strategic Summary 2023-2025 – FINAL
July 2022

Michigan's food and agriculture sector is a key contributor to our rural communities in West Michigan, and to Michigan's long-term economic, environmental, and social health. The food and agriculture industry contributes \$104.7 billion annually to the state's economy, with over 2400 food & beverage processors and 48,000 farms, employs 805,000 people which accounts for 17% of the manufacturing sector, and is one of the three largest industries in Michigan, according to MDARD 2022 publications.

However, despite its statewide significance, food processing businesses face acute barriers to long-term stability and growth in the State of Michigan due to needs for 1) increased infrastructure, 2) additional/trained labor force and workforce development, 3) new innovative sustainable product and technology investments, 4) strengthened regional and global supply chains, and 5) sustainable and resilient pathways to the future of food production and innovation.

Since 2017, the West Michigan Food Processing Association (WMFPA) has supported West Michigan's food processing sector and the regional supply chain, focusing on its 6 strategic pillars: economic development, education, incubator/innovation, supply chain logistics, healthier processed foods, and sustainable practices. Over the past three years, the WMFPA intensified support in areas of economic development, education, and incubator/innovation, which has resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in potential economic development investment in the West Michigan region, and the completion of a stage-2 incubator facility to support the sector through industry 4.0 product innovations and food experiments/STEM training with students throughout the region.

Moving forward, over the next three years from 2023-2025, the WMFPA will refine its focus into four key areas:

Strengthen West Michigan's regional supply chain by increasing locally sourced products from Michigan farmers to area institutions including schools, food pantries, senior meals, after school programs and others, prioritizing underserved farmers and communities.

GOAL: create more local and regional wealth for farmers, food businesses, area institutions, and enhance nutritional security in communities that need it most.

- Address key barriers to local food access; increasing value-added locally sourced products, regional infrastructure, and community and regional collaboration
- Conduct surveys with consumers, local food businesses, and farmers to determine specific bottlenecks and issues in developing a more robust local sustainable supply chain management
- Integrate triple bottom line sustainable procurement and supply chain management best practices
- Focus primarily on fruit and vegetable food processors in West Michigan

Evolve sustainability best practices in key areas such as regenerative farming, climate mitigation, the circular economy, sustainable supply chain management, sustainable procurement, and sustainability reporting such as environmental, social, and governance (ESG)

GOAL: share and implement sustainability best practices across the food processing industry

- **Tailored educational programs and case studies** from the C-Suite to plant floor including management alignment and triple bottom line sustainability impact and value creation. These best practices will help develop enhanced business value and establish an environment to build brand image and increase overall business competitiveness.
- **Broader assessments** within the food industry including sustainability experts, local and state government officials, and other stakeholders to determine specific sustainability risks and threats to developing a prosperous Michigan agricultural economy.
- **Specific tools and resources** to assess performance, value creation, and other measurements of sustainability within the food processing industry

Develop a well-connected sustainability business network across the Michigan agricultural economy including food processors, farmers, practitioners, trade and professional organizations, and local and state government officials.

GOAL: build a stronger Michigan food industry awareness and presence by establishing a collective industry voice.

- Host regular conferences, meetings, webinars, workshops etc. that support food processing industry priorities
- Expand and construct a stronger online presence
- Continue meeting with key industry executives and officials to advance food processing priorities
- Grow the WMFPA membership base across the food processing industry including food industry ingredient suppliers, manufacturers, processors, distributors, retailers, farmers.

Establish a sustainable financial model for long term sustainability of the WMFPA including organizational efficiencies.

GOAL: ensure that the WMPFA has ongoing sufficient resources to pursue and implement desired programs and activities that are supported by its members.

- Evaluate grants that afford the WMFPA and its members to address important food industry issues and opportunities
- Pursue member sponsorships for desired programs and activities
- Evaluate the opportunity of transitioning to a membership dues based trade and industry professional organization
- Seek other organizations and enterprises to collaborate and partner with on important food industry issues and opportunities
- Transition and grow board members and responsibilities

Budget 2023-2025

Requesting \$300,000 from State of Michigan, over 3 years that will be matched with industry and supplier sponsorships and community and regional organization support. Annual Budget \$250,000.