Open Food Federation White Paper

Purpose, Diagrams and Definitions

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Federation Purpose

The Open Food Federation (Federation) *provides transparent technologies to local food networks.* The Federation leverages collective resources to provide open, collaborative, and sustainable products and services to local food hubs in four cornerstone areas:

1. Create and provide support to a community of OFS software users
2. Create, support and provide direction to an OFS software development community
3. Ensure project sustainability and continuity
4. Provide additional value-added services to OFS Federation members and other OFS users (examples: group web hosting and hosted OFS deployments, group insurance plans; shared membership benefits network, merchant services packages and integration)

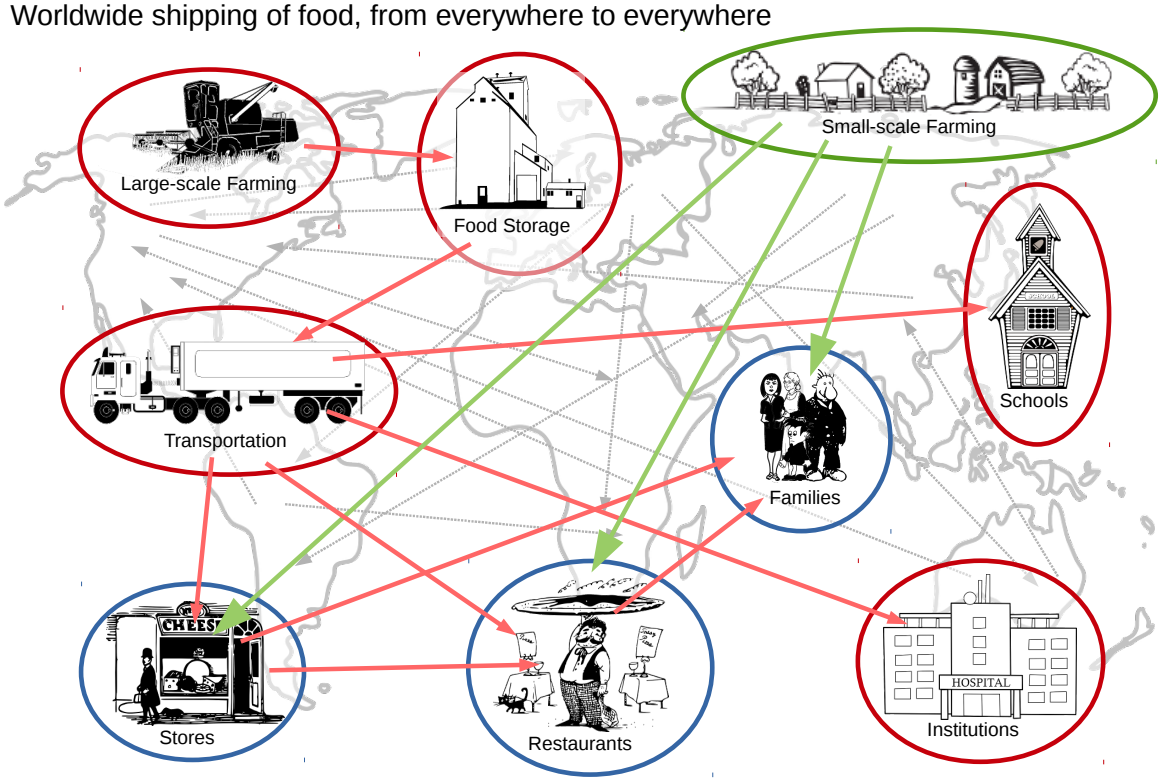
Diagrams

The following diagrams (pp.2-3) describe the context and intention of the Open Food Federation project:

5. **Simplified Industrial Food Network (p.2):** The status-quo of the non-local industrial food system. Small-scale, local farming exist marginally in this food system, supplying mostly to a few stores, restaurants and families. Mega-farm operations supply most other community institutions by way of food storage and transportation networks. Food can change hands several times before it reaches the target consumer.
6. **Basic Food Hub (p.2):** Food hubs provide aggregation, processing and distribution services to local small producers, giving them access to a wider range of consumer markets. Food hubs allow farms to achieve a collective economy of scale without needing to actually scale up their operations. Food hubs may allow small-scale, local operations to participate more centrally in local food systems and economies.
7. **On-line Food Hub (p.3):** Local food systems whose core operations rely on web-based software function like 24-7 online farmers markets, allowing producers and consumers to participate in ways that are much more predictable and convenient for them. The software can also drastically reduce food hub risk and costs while providing enhanced, automated logistical support.
8. **Open Food Federation (p.3):** On-line food hubs aggregate resources through grassroots organizing to provide themselves enhanced services and support with minimal overhead and maximum flexibility and freedom to increase their economic competitive edge.

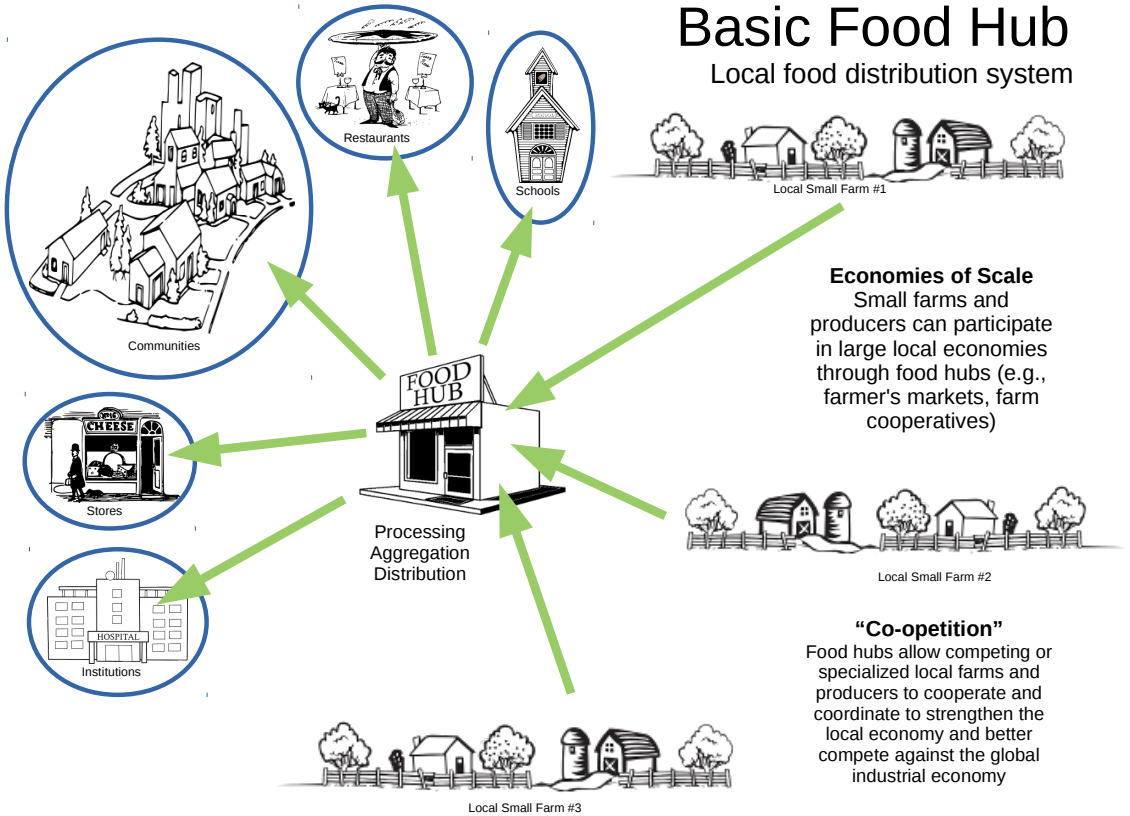
Simplified Industrial Food Network

Worldwide shipping of food, from everywhere to everywhere



Basic Food Hub

Local food distribution system

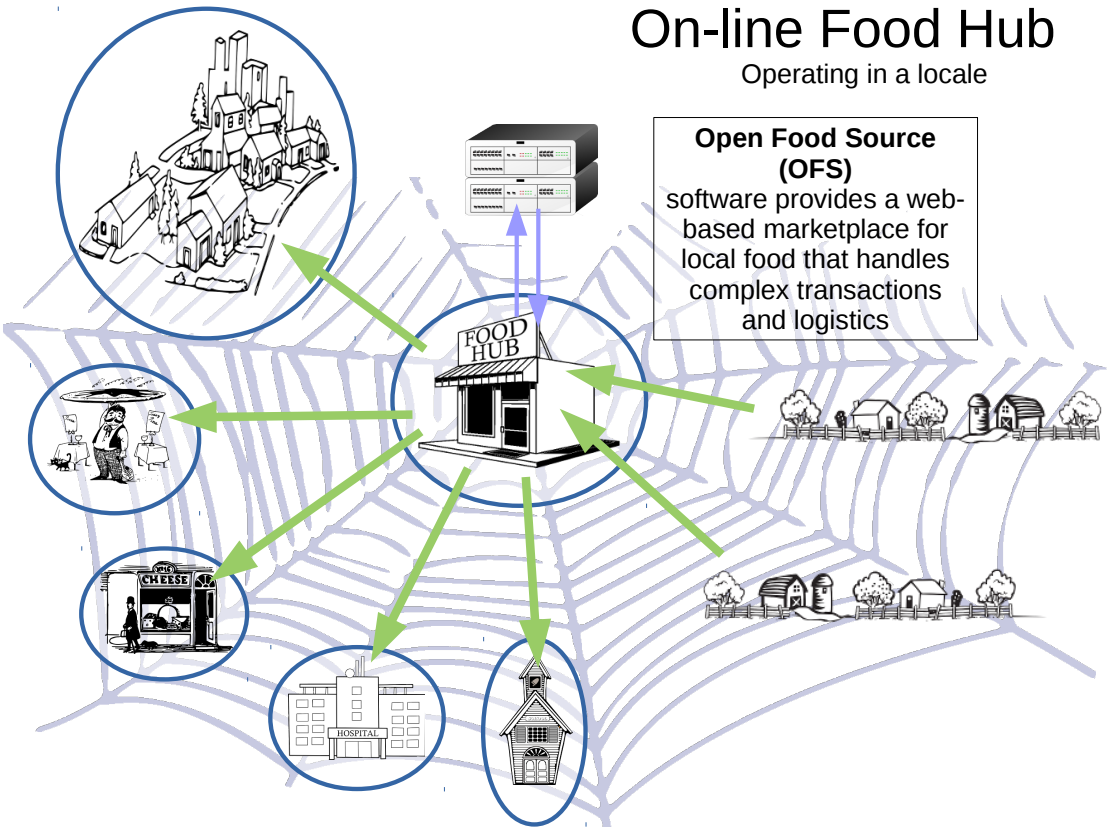


Economies of Scale
Small farms and producers can participate in large local economies through food hubs (e.g., farmer's markets, farm cooperatives)

"Co-opetition"
Food hubs allow competing or specialized local farms and producers to cooperate and coordinate to strengthen the local economy and better compete against the global industrial economy

On-line Food Hub

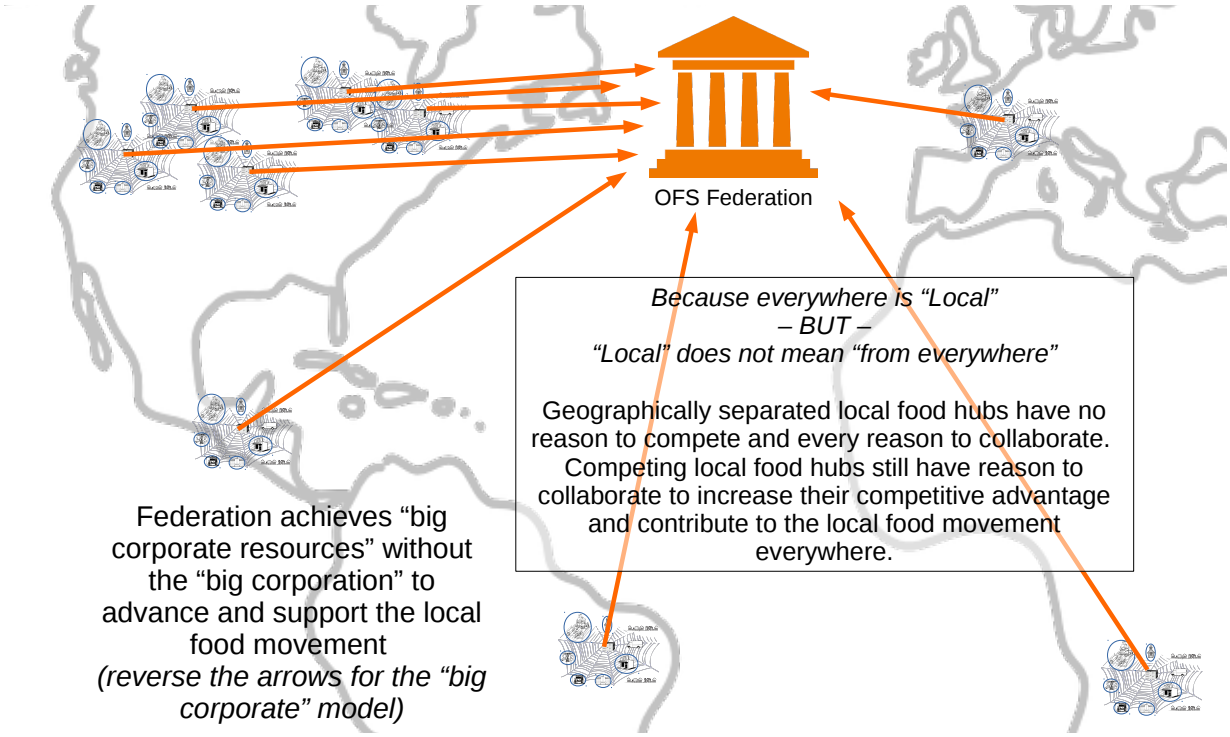
Operating in a locale



Open Food Source (OFS)
software provides a web-based marketplace for local food that handles complex transactions and logistics

Open Food Federation

Providing services to Open Food Source Food Hubs



Because everywhere is "Local"
– BUT –
"Local" does not mean "from everywhere"

Geographically separated local food hubs have no reason to compete and every reason to collaborate. Competing local food hubs still have reason to collaborate to increase their competitive advantage and contribute to the local food movement everywhere.

Federation achieves "big corporate resources" without the "big corporation" to advance and support the local food movement
(reverse the arrows for the "big corporate" model)

Definitions

Cooperative Business: A business collectively-owned and -operated by any combination of its participants (consumers, workers or suppliers). People become members by purchasing a member share in the business. Members retain democratic control of the business and often gain access to other benefits (such as special member prices or other discounts, profit shares, etc).

Local Food Network: A marketplace of local consumers and producers who buy and sell locally-produced foods. Consumers may be retail or wholesale customers. Producers may be local farmers or artisans.

Local Food Hub: An organization that exists to support, facilitate or operate a local food network. Often, but not always, structured as member-owned cooperatives of consumers, producers, workers or some combination thereof. According to the USDA, food hubs "offer a combination of production, aggregation, distribution, and marketing services," making it possible for producers to "gain entry into new and additional markets that would be difficult or impossible to access on their own."[1]

Local Food Movement: A coordinated effort to establish local food networks in every community and increase the share of locally-grown or produced food in people's diets to enhance community food access, safety, security and maintain trust and transparency between producers and consumers.

Free (libre) Open Source Software (FLOSS): Software licensed and distributed in a way that legally guarantees it will always remain transparent and free for people to access, use, study and modify as they see fit, without monetary charge or legal repercussions.

The Gnu General Public License (GPL): A specific (and one of the most commonly-used) recursive FLOSS license that requires additional software projects making use of any GPL FLOSS code to retain the GPL-license to to protect what the Free Software Foundation calls the Four Software Freedoms.

Open Food Source (OFS): A specific GPL software project that helps local food hubs coordinate all aspects of economic activities and functions of a local food network. This includes a storefront for coordinating on-line sales, inventory management, membership management, routing and logistical support services.

Open Food Federation (Federation): A community of OFS-using food hubs and developers. Participants work collectively to develop, provide and support the OFS software and other transparent technologies for local food networks alongside other relevant cost-effective services for participating hubs (such as web hosting services and group insurance plans).

[1] from http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/FoodHubs accessed Jan 16, 2015