

# FOOD is POWER:

Revitalizing Community Through Developing a Local Food System

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# Ajo Center for Sustainable Agriculture



# Ajo Regional Food Partnership (ARFP)



# Authentically Ajo Farmers Market



# Why Local Food Systems Matter?

- ▶ Self-reliability of the community with the food supply / crisis scenarios
- ▶ Combat disease and obesity, food desert/poverty issues
- ▶ Create local jobs (growing, processing, selling)
- ▶ Create training and educational opportunities for kids, youth and adults
- ▶ Increase capacity of the community members and community
- ▶ Create opportunities to make a difference, even if small
- ▶ Transform the look and feel of the town: green spaces - public and private
- ▶ Revitalization of the downtown/center (farmers market, food festival)
- ▶ Strengthen social networks and organizational collaborations
- ▶ Create a new positive discourse about the people and the community

“Planting today is to believe in a better tomorrow.”

## Since 2009, ARFP:

- ▶ Increased agricultural surfaces from a couple thousand square feet to more than 50,000 square feet, and growing
- ▶ Increased the number of families participating in the local food system from about 15 to about 200 (10% of households in Ajo)
- ▶ Increased the lbs of food grown from 100 lbs in 2009 to over 7,000 lbs in 2015
- ▶ Increased the lbs of food sold from 100 lbs in 2010 to over 3,000 lbs
- ▶ Increased the \$\$ of food sold from \$500 in 2010, to over \$15,000 this year!
- ▶ Trained over 25 youth (4G interns), 300 kids and 300 adults
- ▶ Changed the behavior and food choices of community members, created numerous private and public green spaces, and changed the way people speak and think about Ajo!

# Next steps:

- ▶ Keep supporting the development in all four areas: Grow, Learn, Cook and Market
- ▶ Continue to include more low-income population, including adding WIC (done) and SNAP to the farmers market options, backyard garden programs, food pantry support, school gardens and school cafeteria
- ▶ Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance will result in the food system / food economy development plan
- ▶ Develop a brand to mark and market Ajo-grown and produced products
- ▶ Buy Local Campaign - Ajo's population alone spends at least \$10 million / year on food, goal is to capture 10% of that (collaboration with Ajo Chamber of Commerce)

# THANK YOU!

- ▶ Community Foundation for Southern Arizona
- ▶ Freeport McMoran Foundation
- ▶ USDA - AMS
- ▶ Local First Arizona
- ▶ Ajo community members who believe in the better future for themselves, their neighbors and those coming behind them!!!

