

A Cultivate Michigan Local Food Distribution Tour Transcript

[Intro cheerful music]

Grant Fletcher: My name is Grant Fletcher, I'm the System Director of Nutrition, Retail And Suitability at Bronson Healthcare Group - Southwest Michigan, and I'm here at Cherry Capital today to experience the, the environment, see what they've got going on from the distributor standpoint, and learn more about products that are available to us as a healthcare institution, looking to source more responsibly raised and grown food for our patients and families and visitors.

Sarah Chartier: My name is Sarah Chartier, I'm the Sustainability Program Manager at Spectrum Health, and I'm here today talking about sustainable foods in Michigan and how we can look at more local produce and local items in our healthcare system. So we are really passionate about local foods and sustainability at Spectrum Health. So we are utilizing a lot of the resources of Cultivate Michigan to access through our distributor local and sustainable options.

Evan Smith: I'm the CEO of Cherry Capital Foods which is a local food distributor. So what we do is pick up directly at the farm and deliver as a wholesale distributor to restaurants, schools, institutions, anywhere that there are eaters looking for local food.

Brent Jansen: Cherry Capital Foods buys anything that's Michigan made, processed, or grown of value-added proteins produce, and then we sell it to anybody that's in Michigan, and right now our focus has been all Michigan, both incoming and outgoing. When I started we were within 150 mile radius of Traverse City, and now we cover the whole state of Michigan.

Christine Quane: We want to support our local economy, you know, it's why we buy American-made cars. It's, you know, it's why we support our Great Lakes, you know, it taps into that. It's it's our local economy.

Fletcher: Our current State of 30% local sourcing, our goal, our stretch goal is to reach 60%.

Rachel Bair: Kalamazoo Valley Community College is building a new healthy living campus, and one of the components of that campus is a food hub and food production center where we'll be growing food on-site, and we'll also be sourcing food from other local farms and supplying it to our local institutions like Bronson Hospital. I hope to learn some of the best practices for distributing local food to institutions, connecting those local growers with the hospitals and school systems that need to eat their food.



Chartier: Transparency in the market place is something that's we're, we're really interested in and the shorter the supply-chain, the easier it is for us to understand where our foods coming from, and how safe it is and how local it is to our community. So we look at the full lifecycle of our products and how we can get more sustainable products that are closer to home.

Smith: If you really want to build a value chain, what you have to do is assure that everyone along that supply chain is making a living, is paying a livable wage, and is holding the same values that everyone along that value chain subscribes to, and I think that's the distinction between a supply chain and a value chain.

Jansen: It's a great business for us because it's a typically a year round business unlike our restaurants, and if you're familiar with Traverse City, it's very cyclical. You have a whole bunch in the summertime, and service all the tourists, and then it dies down in the wintertime. So we need a year-round business like that, and institutions allow us to do that.

Chartier: We are really excited about engaging staff and healthy foods and sustainability.

Fletcher: We found that we've been most effective and most successful establishing direct relationships, but there are some instances where a direct relationship doesn't produce enough volume or capacity for our needs and our demand, and that's when someone like Cherry Capital can step in and really only be one person removed from the individual who we're trying to support and source that food from, that's, that's you really meaningful for us and our customers.

Smith: The reality is the demand is there, and our farmers are scaling up to meet that demand. So what we're really seeing is everyone that's involved in food and, who knew it was all of us, are coming together to say "Yeah, let's see what we can do!"

[Ending cheery-cherry music]

