June 22 Meeting Agenda: The first hour of our June meeting will focus on local food models. During the second hour of the meeting, we will focus on soil health. Some years ago, many of us didn’t think much about soil. These days, we know that soil health is critical to ensure that crops are productive. For related and recent information on soils, please see these recent articles on soil: Soil Health is Much More Than Nutrient Levels (Growing Produce), Five Signs You Might Be the Perfect 'Soil Mate'; Soils and pulses: symbiosis for life; Micronutrients Needed for Macro Yields.

Local Food Models:

1. Amber Canto, State Coordinator, FoodWise, University of Wisconsin-Extension, will share information about how her organization leveraged a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant in 2014 to study barriers for SNAP customers to shop at farmers markets and how market managers and community partners used the results of the study to overcome these barriers.

2. Jerry Ann Hebron, Executive Director, Northend Christian Community Development Inc., will share information about the organization’s Oakland Avenue Farm and Farmers Market and other programs that develop Detroit youth by building character, education, and environmental appreciation.

3. Alice Maggio, Director of Programs, Schumacher Center for a New Economics, will share information about the organization’s Berkshares program, which is a local currency designed and issued for circulation in local businesses in the Berkshire region of Massachusetts.

Soil Health:

4. Bala Chaudhary, Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Science and Studies, DePaul University, will share information about her research that focuses on plant-microbe interactions and soil ecology to address issues related to soil health.

5. Michelle Wander, Professor, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois, will share information about her research related to the influence of management systems (tillage and cover crops, perennials, organic farming systems; crop rotation and fertilization) on soils.

6. Hannah Shayler, Extension Associate, Cornell University (NY), will share information about the Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities research and outreach program developed in response to concerns about contaminants in urban gardens and other community spaces. This work assessed contamination in community gardens in New York City and other areas and developed recommendations for healthy gardening practices to minimize the exposures of gardeners, garden visitors, and other community members to soil contaminants.

7. James Rospopo, Soil Conservation Technician, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, will share information about NRCS programs and resources that can help agricultural producers to promote soil health (invited).