EATING LOCAL IN CITIES?

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INTRODUCTION
Living in rural Vermont, it is easy to be spoiled with artisan goat cheese, local apples, and Irish red from a microbrewery.

What about cities?
By looking at small vegetable farms in the surroundings of cities, overall farm densities are displayed proportionally. Each line graph shows the breakdown of farm densities as one moves away from a city.

METHOD
Areal-weighted aggregation base on number of small (less than 15 acres) vegetable farms by zip code and 10 buffers with a 20-mile interval from each city.

RESULTS
1) Overall, the density of small farms decreases as the distance from a city increases, possibly explained by the growth of larger farms further away from populated areas that are not accounted for.
2) The East Coast has greater small farm density than that of the West Coast. Due to regional climate, the Southwest generally has less farms.
3) The Northwest, the Northeast, and the Midwest have a more significant drop in farm density as distance increases; whereas the South has less of a variation.

CONCLUSION
In addition to cultural differences, the potential of eating local in an urban context varies based on the existing availability of local farms and regional climate limitations. Further suggested research includes the correlation between local food production and consumption.

LEGEND
Farm density (count/1,000 sqmi) within 200 miles of a city

SOURCEs
United States Department of Agriculture National Agriculture Statistics Service
Data on zip codes, state boundaries, and major cities from Middlebury College Splinter

* All the selected cities have populations between 400,000 and 600,000, except Boise with a population of 200,000.