

Integrating Local Food into the Local Food System Focus Group Notes

Feb 5, 2014

4 Attendees:

- USDA and NYSDAM grants are a real pain. Farmers get turned off.
- Farm safety is a concern. A farmer just died.
- Need to do a food system assessment
- There was a recent news article about people complaining about buffalo not being properly sheltered because they were outdoors in the winter weather. People don't understand that this is not actually a problem, that buffalo and other livestock don't need shelter like people or pets. Need better public education.
- Restaurants are getting pressure by public and Culinary Bounty to incorporate local food ingredients into menus. Not sure how successful this is, it's not always posted that local ingredients are used.
- Food Pantries- NYS Dept of Health grant for vouchers for people to go to Central NY Food Bank. Farmers donate to food banks, the Farm Bureau does a press release every year. Food Link in Rochester buys from farmers, gives to banks.
- The Southern Cayuga FFA held a gleaning event – talk to Andy Miller?
- The pantries prefer to get people to increase positive behavior. Have “healthy bucks” that are given out and that can be used at farmers markets. It's easy for farmers to get reimbursed with these. Other similar programs, it's not so easy. The NYS-wide food security groups are working on this.
- Senior coupons were late this past year – people really wanted them. The seniors get bussed to the farmers markets. Cayuga Health Network organized buses.

Institutions:

- Port Byron School District - relationship with Guidone? ask the Food Service Director. Need to look at a regional level.
- Wells, Cayuga Community College (CCC), nursing homes, hospital, daycare centers. CCC doesn't prepare any food at all, there's a Subway sandwich shop.
- Other places – finding ways to make this happen.
- Advance Meals – a lot of senior housing meals, the Meal on Wheels program
- There are opportunities to encourage collaborations with institutions
- Loretto and Advance Meals provide a lot of the prepared institutional meals in the county. Need to create customer demand, educate consumers on what they're getting served.
- There is a lot of support of farmer's markets throughout the county.
- Need a year-round market, but this is a farmer niche (*not for all farmers/ farm models?*)
- Need different market channels for each farmer biz model
- The restaurants that claim they use local ingredients – need more transparency here. Some don't really use local food or may only use one or two local items.
- Could do more wholesale at the Auburn farmer's market, if the restaurants/institutions were interested in it.

How to make stronger food system connections happen?

- Need enough demand
- Need right price
- Identify supply of farms to provide products.
- An ambitious farmer/person to do this
 - Regional Access model
 - Heidelberg model/Helderberg model? (spelling?) in the capital district
- ** need aggregation
 - Web-based program/apps/network
 - CNY Bounty – now defunct. Showed some success with promotion in Madison County. Spawned a cool localized local food movement
 - public sector is not the solution to this. It needs to be private

The Public Role:

- identify opportunities
- generating demand through education and promotion of health benefits but also by promoting benefits to the local economy
- State-level work: the state wants to start tracking local food dollars spent. Cuomo has instructed his director to start procuring local, so it's a state priority
- need an understanding of seasonality: education and celebration of seasonality
- Chamber of Commerce is looking at a "buy local" campaign. Want a 10% shift in spending.

Restaurants

- some say they buy local but don't
- some do buy local but don't advertise it!
- Could do a business card campaign, carry cards with you that say, "Where's the New York food on the menu?" and give them to restaurants you eat at. Restaurants respond to consumer pressure

Meat Production

- ** need livestock slaughterhouses
- Bridge gap between livestock farm and customers
- Need right price-point for institutions
- Meat: more mature local demand than for other products (Mesa Grande would purchase if it was possible, but doesn't have access b/c not enough slaughterhouses)
- A non-profit meat resource is CAID. Always have SWCD from each county on its advisory council.

Food Hubs/ Distribution

- We could have a regional food hub. We have Route 90.
- Wholesharing – buying club in Moravia (*group of residents that together purchase wholesale to get better prices and products*). Wholeshare.com software system. They get a share from Regional Access.

Regulatory Burdens

- Food safety certifications
- GAP
- CCE could be doing trainings
- Food safety modernization act – FDA. Farmers are in a "wait & see" mode

- Distributors and buyers are demanding standards for farm products

Local small-scale food processing facilities

- CCE- had a commercial kitchen that is licensed, but the building is getting old. CCE will have to relocate at some point.
- Montezuma Hotel – use as a community center, visitor’s center, and had a commercial kitchen. Used to prepare senior meals in the county, but the kitchen got sold off.