

Local Foods Stakeholder Meeting
July 31, 2014
Meeting Notes

Action Points

Stakeholders:

- Request for stakeholders to review the map and website
- Provide contacts of anyone else you would like to see in this group
- List any projects your organization may already be working on, plan to work on, or need collaboration with
- Include anything that you didn't get to say in the meeting

Staff:

- Staff compiled meeting notes to send out with Powerpoint and contact list
- Updating the Website
- Making contact with any additional persons
- Scheduling future meetings

Funding Sources and Collaboration Opportunities

- The Regional Commission has submitted a letter of interest for the Local Foods, Local Places Program
- The Building Collaborative Communities Program may also provide potential funding. Webinar hosted at the Commission on 8/13.

- The Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program and Value Added Producer Program are available to assist agricultural producers
http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/bcp_rbeg.html ;
http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/bcp_vapg.html
- Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program funding is available to assist in economic development efforts
- Funding available through the Carilion Community Grant Program
- LEAP placed a heavy emphasis on collaboration as a method of accomplishing projects
- A farm-matching state program can be found here:
<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/preservation/seker.shtml>

Other Organizations to Contact

- Virginia Food System Council
- Food for Thought
- Natural Resources Conservation Services
- Northwest Economic Development group? (not sure if this is the correct name for this group)

Food System Gaps and Suggestions

Food Deserts:

- Identify food deserts and action items to address those food deserts. Consider overlays of existing infrastructure including public transit/vacant lots/etc

Education and Outreach:

- Focusing education not just on students and youth, but also within institutions/on staff/adults. (Educational programs targeted at major employers? As part of Healthy RV? Extension?)
- Social media can be a powerful way to get messages out to people. People do what other people are doing, so if your friends are doing it you are more likely to do it. Area nonprofits are already engaging in this kind of campaign to some extent, so where is there room to build?

Defining Local:

- Defining local – what are the qualifications for what we will promote as local food? What are the gaps in what is supplied within our food shed? For example, is it all produce? What kinds? Indications that meat processing facility is needed in the area. Gap in processed foods – prepared food elements like pasta sauces and

noodles, for example, probably more likely to come from outside of the food shed (possible exception to that is cheese).

- In defining local, we also define our planning region.
- One possible method of defining local is to define the existing foodshed for the City of Roanoke and then discuss possibility of pushing things in towards the city. (For example, maybe currently all of the goat milk is coming from West Virginia, but we would like to see that sourced here in Botetourt. How can we accomplish that?)

Infrastructure Issues:

- There are missing elements at every level of the food infrastructure/supply chain. Small changes on every level are necessary. The highest level where a gap might be? Lack of a Food Policy Council – the closest approximate is Healthy RV.
- Incorporating big industrial players such as Kroger, etc. Working with culture and infrastructure that already exists. Farm-to-institution programs are also part of this same set of strategies (e.g. getting local food into schools).
- Increasing stability of supply – if you don't have a stable supply, your effort is going to fail.

- We agree that we want consistency of products, not just quality, but quantity and year-round availability. What are strategies to provide that? (Processing areas, aggregators, food hubs.)
- Food hubs have two difference models 1) farmer brings product to food hub for marketing/distribution (fundable by USDA Rural Development); 2) farmer sales product to food hub, which then sales the product as a middle-man (not fundable by USDA Rural Development)

Agritourism:

- Agritourism is still a valuable focus for the project, including active tour days as well as a farm trail. Jillian provided a link for food trail development done in Ireland:
<http://www.failteireland.ie/In-Your-Sector/Food-Tourism-in-Ireland/Food-trail-development.aspx>
- 2015 Farm Tour will be in Roanoke County; possibly include some information on urban agriculture, local food system, etc. as part of farm tour

Additional information:

rvarc.org/sustainability/local-foods