

CFSC Food Policy Council Program Conference Call Notes, February 5, 2008

Topic: Farm to School - The Role of Local and State Food Policy

Participants (apologies if this list is incomplete):

Bill Vervort, United Community Integrated Food Systems Coordinator, tribal work, Oneida, WI

Lisa Long, F2S Jubilee Project, Sneedville TN

Tegan Angle, New Haven FPC

Jim Dyer, CO

Betsy Rosenbluth, Vermont FEED

Matt and Kim Norse, Vermont FEED

Wendy Torrez, Michigan

Heather Hilleran, Madison WI

Justice Justberg Heifer

Jennifer McTiernan from City Seed, New Haven, CT

Mark, Vermont Feed

Megan Campbell, Farm & Food Coalition, Eugene OR

Bonnie Hallam, Philadelphia

Barbara Yager

Sarah Shmigelsky Kansas City Healthy Kids

Lindsay Record, Illinois Stewardship Alliance

___ Shapiro, Kansas City MO

Paula Heshe, Victoria BC

Chris Kirby, Oklahoma City

Marty ? – Agriculture Law Center, Lafayetteville, AR

Deb Johnson, Lane County FPC

Jack ? Oneida, WI

Pam Roy, New Mexico FPC

Leslie Durum, S. IL, F2S program

Anita Poole, Oklahoma

Reecca Fair, King County Extension Office, King County FPC, Seattle WA

Julie Austin, W. IL, local producer

Greg Christian, catering, organic school project in Chicago IL

Martha Davis Kipkik, Milwaukie WI

Steve Hodges, Jubilee project directory in TN, F2S project & 2 bills in state leg

Cassie Johnson, Food Security Partners of Middle TN

Valentine Doyle, Hartford CT

Introduction

Mark Winne, CFSC Food Policy Council Program Director, opens the call:

The purpose of this call is to facilitate information sharing between groups who have been involved and groups who are interested in becoming involved in FPC work. We will be doing several more calls like this before Oct 1st (the end of our grant period). Please let us know if there's a call topic that interests you that might be of interest to others as well by sending an email to me at

mark@foodsecurity.org.

Announcements

We have two upcoming Training Workshops for people interested in developing FPCs and those who have active FPCs:

- Milwaukee WI, Feb. 28 & 29. Starts Noon on 28th goes until afternoon of 29th. Still space available. Go to www.growurban.org to register before Feb 24th. Held at the Downtown Hilton, still has rooms available.
- Santa Fe, NM, May 5. It will be an all-day training. Registration materials are not yet available but to make sure you get all the info when it's available, call (505) 473-1004. It will be followed by the SW Marketing Network Conference.
- Both workshops emphasize regional connections, but we have room for those outside the region as well if you're interested. Visit <http://www.foodsecurity.org/FPC/meetings.html> for more information about these trainings, or contact me directly at mark@foodsecurity.org with any questions.

Website update: We have a list of Food Policy Councils in North America on our website. Please go to the website to make sure that you're listed, and check if the information is current. If you are not there and have a FPC, please let us know. If you have reports or materials (electronic) we would love to share them on our website for others.

See the council list at: <http://www.foodsecurity.org/FPC/council.html>

You can also find us at www.foodpolicycouncil.net

Speakers

We have invited several speakers on this call to share their experiences with us:

- Anita Poole of the Kerr Center
- Betsy Rosenbluth of Vermont FEED
- Bonnie Halland, Food Trust PA

Each will provide some background on how they have used Food Policy to promote Farm to School projects. We will have 2 minutes of clarifying questions after each speaker, then 30 minutes for a Q & A at the end, which will be an opportunity for more in-depth questions and comments.

Anita Poole of the Kerr Center in Oklahoma

We started in 2001 as a partnership between the Kerr Center and the Dept of Agriculture. At the first meeting when we formed a Food Policy Council, we discussed what a FPC could do, trying to decide where they could make the most impact to build a basis for the rest of our work. They were interested in local food, needed to determine what the level of demand was for local foods. They determined that they could make the biggest impact by increasing state institutions' use of local food. First step was to initiate an institutional survey. We

developed the survey for all state institutions: schools, universities, prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, state parks, and govt. offices. There was a 70% response rate – the survey showed us that over half of the institutions were very interested in local sourcing, and also revealed some potential barriers as to why they are not yet purchasing locally. Perceived barriers included: Purchasing guidelines, geographic preferencing issues, (mistaken belief that they were) prohibited from buying fresh produce from a farmer who had not been inspected. Schools especially were interested, so we developed a pilot project with schools, starting small to build a basis for a larger effort. Did research on other school programs; North Carolina, North Florida Coop, and Dept of Defense were existing examples. Hosted a meeting with the FPC, invited school superintendents & people from different agencies. The Dept of Defense and Food Marketing Services came from a Texas office. We invited other school reps, and brought in those who had Farm to School programs already to speak to the school reps about their experiences. Dept of Defense was doing procurement for local military bases, worked with mom & pop distributors, farmers, brokers, etc to make sure they filled standards. First 2 years we worked with Dept of Defense, focused on watermelons. Started small to make sure they worked out the kinks before growing. One product in 4 districts, needed to make sure we could work out all the kinks in the system. Expanded to 6 schools in 2nd year. In the third year, the Dept of Defense started changing their practices and wouldn't be able to work with small distributors anymore, so we decided to seek state assistance who could do what Dept of Defense had done for us before.

Partners: Anne Roberts, of the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy, partnered with us because their organization was looking for programs they could support in the legislature to help reduce childhood obesity. She provided assistance to help initiate legislation and take it through the legislature. Asked us to produce lots of material not only about budgets, etc but also what we were looking for in this legislation. She started talking with the legislators, found a few champions who helped get the bills started. (We had presented our challenges to the Department of Agriculture - we kept them informed the whole time. They have a lobbyist on staff but the lobbyist was tied up with other issues and was unable to help us.) Sen. Lawlor became a champion, instituted an interim study to look at benefits to the state of Farm to School. Mark came and spoke to the interim committee, we also had Leslie with the National Association of State Legislatures come speak with them. We started the process to get our bill through and then there was a Senate bill introduced here.

Every step along the process there's an opportunity for the bill to fail. Sometimes it's not a big problem but in Oklahoma there was a problem every step of the way. We managed to make it through every step through a lot of education, we held lots of speaking events and we gained a lot of supporters that way. When it passed it was unanimous and the governor signed it. It was signed in May but it takes longer for the State to hire someone, and during the summer we needed to place orders for the schools in the Fall so we contracted

someone to do that work that the Dept of Ag would be doing once hired. The program expanded from 6 to 32 school districts in that summer. When the Dept of Agriculture finally hired someone, our FPC helped determine the hiring criteria/job description and we were able to hire the person who we had contracted over the summer, Chris Kirby.

One problem we encountered was the fight between the two parties. One party controlled Senate, another controlled the House. Required lots of finessing, and the senator had to take it to the House side to get it through. Another problem we encountered was that we had made a brochure and the new food pyramid had come out from USDA, but it was too difficult to understand so we included the Harvard University version and the Beef Council was upset because the Harvard University pyramid says to not eat much red meat - they threatened to kill the bill because of this, so she stopped using the brochures.

Questions for Anita:

Q (Kirsten Simmons, Michigan FPC): Re: issues with partisanship. Was there any one big root problem that they had with it in the legislature that might be helpful for us to know?

A: They all wanted the same thing, everyone wanted to take credit for it.

Q (Greg Christian): Do you think if you had more of a shared vision among stakeholders, esp. Dept of Defense, would they have stayed with small distributors?

A: The people we worked with wanted to keep the sourcing local, but it was a national decision to do that. We met some of the national people but the decision came from very high up, we didn't have access to them to change their minds.

Betsy of Vermont FEED:

Will speak today about two efforts, one local & one statewide. Statewide: hired by Vermont Feed to help form a State Farm to School Council, realized there was an interest in State legislation. Legislators were introducing bills on their own related, but in a vacuum. Things were happening by coincidence. Original bill was to give Farmer's Markets coupons to schools to purchase food. First thing we did was to talk with state agencies (dept of Health, Ag, Education) to get them on the same page as constituents who were already doing farm to school. Got them to talk about what was possible, what the needs were. Tried to quickly build a coalition for some broader state legislation. This effort was very successful. We then focused on a bill - first to get it in Governors' budget and agencies' budgets, that was not successful. Then tried to get it introduced in committee. Work was to get broader buy-in in the House. Foundation grant funded my time to spend at the Sate house, this is one of the things that helped lead to our success. Check out Vermont FEED website, provides grants to communities in Vermont for equipment, purchasing, training materials, teacher

curriculum materials, etc. Very broad in its scope. Now we have about 100 schools out of 350 schools in the district that have some farm to school activity, so it's been very successful so far and we're hoping to continue that in the coming year. The Legislation also supports food service training, technical assistance for teachers & farmers. In the first year there was a research component to tell us how we can expand this effort so it doesn't require us to come back to the legislature every year for funding. Rather than a broad state policy, it worked in the long run to build a grassroots network across the state in communities and we're continuing that dialogue to form a state F2S council. We now have funding and energy to come back to a FPC. We submitted a list of policy & other activities around purchasing, processing, distribution that would help that effort but it hasn't translated into legislation yet. Hopefully a council would help get that into legislation.

Students went to the state House cafeteria and did taste tests with legislators. We were viewed as experts to bring in speakers to testify - nurses, farmers, etc. Tried to get support from other groups such as the Farm Bureau, who did not oppose the bill. Also worked to get support from the School Board Association, Principal Association, Superintendent Association. Nobody really opposed it but it wasn't high priority for them, it was a struggle to get it higher on their priority list.

Local effort: Involved with forming a food council in city of Burlington, VT. Initially it was a FPC but there was such opposition in the school environment to the word Policy so we turned it into a small p but essentially it did the same thing as an FPC without that inflammatory word. It was very different – initially formed to represent very different stakeholders but evolved to those who would come would participate. Probably the most success came from getting all these people together at the same time. For example, the nutrition services from the hospital came for the first meeting and kept coming, eventually they started contracting with local farmers to supply the hospital cafeteria. There are lots of stories of the synergy that happened from that FC. We decided it would be more effective if it were under a larger umbrella, so we asked the Legacy steering committee to include the council as one of its projects. The initial focus was on conducting a community food assessment (identify gaps, narrow the scope) and then develop an action plan. In later years we have monitored the action plan, it took a very focused monthly agenda to do that, it has been very successful. There is now discussion of incorporating that policy into broader policy citywide, such as within green building policy.

Questions for Betsy:

Q (Steve Hodges): Is there anything more you can say about the opposition that arose?

A: The greatest resistance came from state agencies. Not the Dept of Health as

much as the Dept of Ag, which had priorities outlined, there was a lot of conversation in the back rooms with them. It wasn't that they thought it was a bad thing, but we couldn't convince them that it would meet their needs for their own agenda for marketing, or developing consumers. Over time as the movement has grown there's now a bit more opening around that, they've now hired someone to do F2S. Now the issue is coordination. Farm Bureau: it's just working systematically with them, more turf issues than anything else. We've kept constant communication with them, launching events, kickoff events, celebrations of success to create a sense of ownership to get past these turf issues. Bill passed unanimously, it had tri-partisan support (Vermont has 3 parties). Dairy and others had some resistance. We got to them through their stomachs and by bringing the kids to events.

Q (Greg Christian, Chicago): Did it work better to talk about economy or about health?

A: There were a lot of concerns about the money going into health care. Health care reform was a huge priority for leg and the cost of chronic health disease so we would compare the cost for our programs to the cost of health care for these diseases, presented it as putting the money into prevention. Show how the issues are linked, pull the priorities from the leg and use them in our arguments. There was an agriculture component and economic argument, but health and education worked best, depending on the audience.

Bonnie Hallam, Food Trust PA:

Our policy started with a program called the Kindergarten Initiative, piloted in 2004 Sept with 4 schools – goal was early intervention to start healthy food choices, and connect them with where their food comes from to motivate them to eat healthy food. Our other interest was in supporting farmers - very involved in farmers' markets. Wanted to make a program that would cross over these venues. Kindergarten Initiative involved getting healthy local snacks into classrooms 3 days/week, farm visits to the same farm 3x/year, and nutrition/agriculture education in the classrooms. It was integrated into the curriculum, and was ongoing through the year so they don't forget it. Pilot program started in 2004 with 4 schools. It was very successful in the first year and drew lots of media attention.

We were also working with an alliance we had co-founded called the Farmers' Market alliance, which proposed some state policy strategies. We went to Harrisburg in 2004 and proposed these strategies to the Senate Ag Chair & House Ag Chair and a representative from Penn State Dept of Ag. They were all at the table and we talked about these different strategies. One of the strategies included was how to get more farm to school programs into PA schools, to educate kids about nutrition as well as Pennsylvania products. This was really welcomed, lots of interest around these strategies in PA agriculture. One senator

(Vaugh) became our champion, was raised on farm, had a young son. Senate & House Ag committees developed from some of our strategies a Farmers First Agenda, put together these initiatives they wanted to happen within a certain timeframe. It included the development of a Healthy Farms, Healthy Schools program and a Farmer's Market Development program. All of this took place between 2004-05. Called us back to come testify before Senate Ag Committee. We brought a parent, a teacher, and a guy from State Ext Service who worked with us and with farmers to testify. The Agriculture Committee was very enthusiastic, and introduced a bill to the Senate in 2006. It was passed and signed into law in late 2006. Part of our success was due to bipartisan support. We didn't pitch it to one party or another. Another thing that helped us was that it was a combination of a nutrition a economic support for farmers. Also by the time we went back to testify, we had done a research project on the program with data showing its successes, parents showed how their buying habits changed. This helped build support as well. By July 2007 it was funded and starting last month there are 46 schools and 15 counties that are now doing this program in their kindergartens.

Lessons learned: developing a strong program is really important to present to someone, to have data showing that it's effective. Building advocacy among parents, farmers, teachers as well as orgs around the state such as Penn Environment, the Farm Bureau, and the Nutrition Education Network helped a lot. Finding a champion is also really important, she was helpful in keeping the issue on the forefront, made sure it was not swept to the side. We had an educator in Harrisburg who met with legislators and shared what was happening in the program, photos of kids & parents enjoying healthy local snacks. It's important to communicate regularly with the legislature, the process is very complicated and it's important to stay on top of that, to see it through all the glitches. Media is also helpful so people can see the impact that it's having on the farmers and kids and their families.

This is now in the budget every year so now our task is to make sure the program continues to be successful so it continues to get funded every year. One of the issues at the beginning of the program was to figure out how do you sustain this? Think about ways to get policies initiated so that your program can live on.

Questions for Bonnie:

Q (Steve Hodges): Any comments on opposition you encountered?

A: We really had very broad support for it, no major opposition.

Q (Tegan Angle, New Haven FPC): Re: logistics – were you doing direct purchasing from farms or were you working with distributors?

A: A bit of both - first year, had a guy from Penn State Extension doing the brokering and distributing for us, the second year we began to purchase directly from farms but had a distributor to deliver it from the farms to the schools. I do

have to say that the few times we actually had a distributor, or broker, we were not happy with the arrangement because the farmers weren't getting quite as fair prices.

Additional questions for any of the speakers:

Q (Deb Johnson from Lane County FPC): Re: the role of the Extension Service in promoting F2S. Did they play any role?

Anita: In Oklahoma, the Ag Extension Economist did the analysis of the institutional survey. They were not involved in pilot project but are very involved now.

Bonnie: Penn State Ext Service was instrumental in locating farmers in the beginners. They had a project called the Keystone Agriculture Innovation Center which was speaking to help farmers find more markets, so they were very interested in our project.

Q (Jim Dyer, CO) for Anita: was the beef group part of your council or were they courted in some way?

A: They were not involved in the council at the beginning, but we hope they will become more involved as the council develops further. Local marketing is not as important to them as it could be and will be in the future. We were trying to fly under the radar politically on some issues.

Q (Steve Hodges): Do any of you have data to share on the number of students impacted, volume of sales, or anecdotal info on health or behavior improvements that we can use to advocate for such programs?

A: Anita can send that to you - email apoole@kerrcenter.com to request that information.

Q (Kim Norris, Vermont FEED) for Bonnie: re: the educator working with legislature and your group working with legislature – how were those roles different and how did you work together?

A: The educator I referred to was not a teacher in the traditional sense but someone who would work with legislators on a variety of issues (an advocate). That was our person on our ground who would talk with legislators and educate them on the issue, address any concerns or questions they had. To address the question of opposition we encountered, because we had a person who could work through challenges that arose on the spot, we didn't really have as much opposition because someone was there to guide us through the challenges. She was a staff member for the senator who was head of the Agriculture Committee, she met with the head of the Agriculture Committee to make sure it stayed in her radar.

Q (Sarah, King County WA) for FEED people: Re: policies on purchasing, distribution & processing: how did you identify & outline those?

Betsy answers: The actual legislation that was passed did not address policy around processing, purchasing & distribution. We realized that the funding would get so bogged down that we moved forward on the pieces there was support for and continued to work on those other pieces to get support, educating stakeholders on the issue. We convened the various stakeholders and brought in people who have done it successfully, bringing in farmers talking about why & how they sell. We tackled it as an awareness-raising and educational approach instead of immediately introducing policy. We have not had success yet in terms of statewide policy but are continuing to build the awareness & support on the community level, making our way across the state.

Additional resources for Farm to School:

Go to www.farmentoschool.org for more information on the National Farm to School Program

Anupama Joshi and Marion Kalb lead this program. You can reach Marion at (505) 982-3646.

Anita Poole is regional lead coordinator for Midwest Region

Pam Roy at Farm to Table is the regional lead coordinator for the Southwest.