

Summary of KC Healthy Food Policy Initiative 2007 Meeting Notes & Discussions

Vision of a Viable Local Food System (as presented at the February Healthy Food Policy Forum):

NEED a food system that calculates the cost of food by its health and nutrient value

- it can be affordable if nutrition rather than yield is the focus and goal.

Changing Values -

- Superior Quality – Food tastes good, is healthy and nutritious
- Food Story – Ethical growing, environmental stewardship, appropriate animal husbandry, fair compensation for workers
- Engagement – Customers are active participants rather than passive recipients

Our Food System is based on 2 tiers:

1. Commodity markets
2. Direct markets.

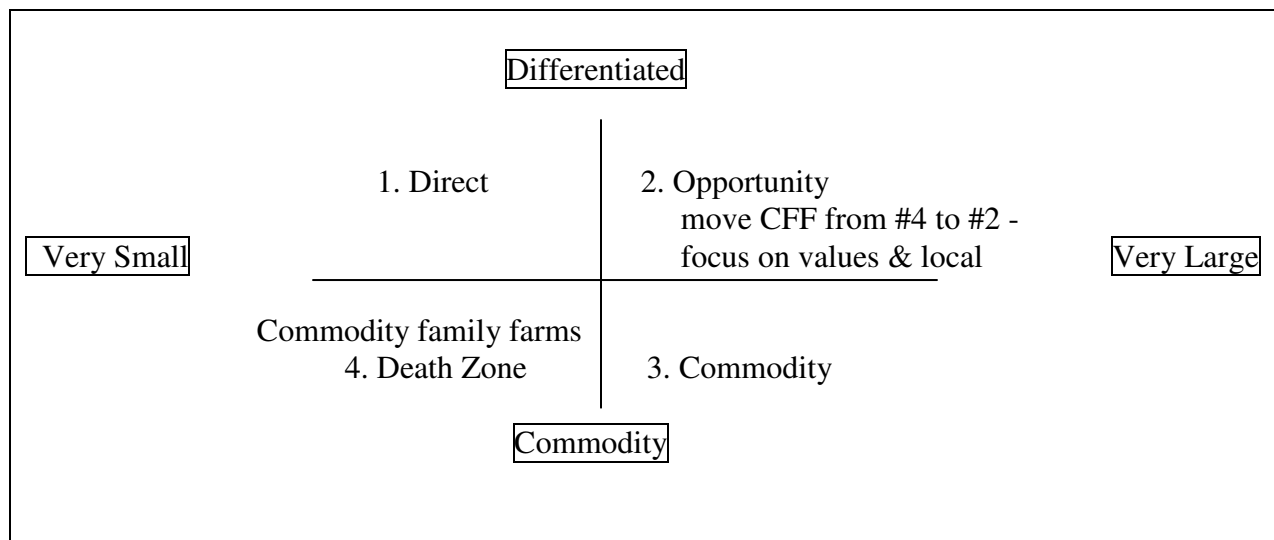
Envision a 3rd Tier:

Farmer marketing consortia – **value based chain** – network of partnering businesses working together to maximize value for the partners and the end customers of a particular product.

Partnership between farmers, packers, fabricators, etc. = transparency

Examples:

- Organic Family
- Shepard's Grain
- Niman Ranch



(Source: Dr. Frederick L. Kirschenmann)

Resources to support above idea:

- USDA Community Food
- USDA Value-added Producer Grant
- Farmers Market Coupon Program
- USDA Office of Civil Rights Office of Outreach
- Food Stamps
- Conservation Security Program
- Integrated Food and Farming Systems
- SARE – Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

Challenges:

Local Food:

- Cheap food policy
 - Really a cheap raw materials and labor policy
 - The focus is on cheap production not on the food itself
 - Cheap ingredients lead to adding value by providing volume.
 - Nutrient Dilution Effect: Focus on yield decreases nutrients
 - We pay less for innutritious food, but pay more for drugs to counteract negative effects of a poor diet
- Cloned Food – FDA Rules – Labeling
- Concern that people are becoming disconnected from farm
- Demand for local food is larger than supply – Why?
 1. Money not accessible – no track record of success
 2. Lack of labor – no family labor, only migrant labor
 3. No crop insurance for small scale vegetable production
 - only corn, soybean...commodities
 4. No health insurance for farmers – (for small business in general)
 5. Large percent of time is spent dealing with rules and regulations
- Local food should be larger percent of food KC area residents eat
- Farmers don't make enough money
 - low to no income
 - no investment capital
- Seasonal Growing – can't grow food year round
- Local food is perceived as more expensive
- Appreciation for daily struggles farmers have to deal with including rules and regulations
- Tough regulations – county, state and across boundaries
 - larger farms/companies have more resources to deal with all the regulations
- Regulation challenges:
 - National School Lunch Program
 - Department of Defense regulates fruits and vegetables
- Concerns about planning/zoning – loss of land to development - we need this land to grow food locally
- How much local acreage is needed to feed our population as a whole?
- Concern regarding GMO seeds and the impact on seed saving - will loose vegetable varieties if not controlled

Schools:

- Need to understand how schools can incorporate local foods considering complex regulations that need to be followed – not a simple process
- Legal issues
- The process is set-up to maintain the status-quo. Schools follow a standard process to get the most for their dollar.
- Concern about the lack of exposure children have to farming in the urban area – should incorporate it into daily living

- Barriers to getting fresh, healthy food into schools:
 - Availability
 - 2. Dollars
 - 3. Student Preferences
 - Example: At Hickman Mills Elementary Schools the gymnasium serves as the lunchroom, so fewer choices is better because it takes less time to prepare and therefore, less time from gym class. The maximum HM can spend is \$2 per meal and less for free and reduced meals. HM found that when students are posed with choices they prefer not to take vegetables.
- Documenting the local Farm to School effort at Oakhill Day School and Bistro Kids
 - How will they document the impact healthier has on kids?
 - What tool will they use to show improvements?
- Nutrition value of pre-packaged (highly-processed) foods vs. homemade
 - Need to elucidate the fact that you cannot determine the level of nutritious food from the number of fat grams and calories, but also understanding the effects of highly-processing food has on its nutrient content.

Anti-hunger:

- The working poor are a large and growing food bank clientele
 - people are working, but they don't have enough money to feed their family
- Uncertain Funding for Federal Nutrition Programs and Food Stamps – these are the front-lines of defense against hunger. If the funding is cut or reduced, food banks have to meet increased demand for food.
- Sufficient donated food supply
 - companies are becoming more efficient in processes to reduce waste, discount stores also impact donation
- Fresh fruit and vegetable supply - it is difficult to supply fresh fruits and vegetable on a consistent basis, unreliability of seasons and knowing when certain fruits and vegetables will be available.
- New technology = less waste – decrease in what Harvesters receives and therefore decreases how much they can offer
- Many people that community outreach organizations serve are dealing with fighting addictions and don't want fruits and vegetables, but rather sugar and carbohydrates

Strategies:

Local Food:

- Rebuild local farming industry - help develop farmers to supply demand for healthy, fresh, local food
- Funders should invest in farmer development
- Find incentives for local farmers
- Local produce in cafeterias, hospitals
- Seasonal growing issue – walk-in cold frame, high tunnel
- Would like to see and understand the commodity or traditional system and how it works to better see what the local farm system struggles are on a large scale
 - Transition to local or organic from traditional
 - Compare costs between local and commodity (traditional)
 - distribution, funding

- Farmland Trust – farmers sell land for retirement money

Education/Schools:

- Start school yard gardens – teach by doing
- Teach gardening/various gardening methods:
 - Rooftop
 - Container
 - Community
- Teach about food systems in school
 - offer guest speaker or tour of local gardens
 - children should learn how to grow their own food
- Educating kids at the school level about healthy food and nutrition
 - Teach kids before age 8 in order for change to occur
 - Educate educators
 - Target Head Start – pre-K needs education and resources
 - State PTA – change in leadership
 - Nutrition education must be supported by administration
- Have farmers meet children – have children produce veggies
- Adult field trips to educate on access
- Use extension program to teach/educate about growing
- Sensory-based education
 - school gardens, cooking, nutrition across curriculum
- Educate teachers about nutrition
- Schools need a template so they don't have to figure out how to buy locally on their own
 - Create or find brochure for schools on how to buy local
- Have School Food Service Directors meet regularly
 - band together and demand using local vendors
- Impact change by learning about the curriculum process in schools
 - children are a captive audience and will take what they learn home to parents
- Increase awareness of incoming professionals/students about nutrition/health for kids and families
- There is a tremendous ability to grown food in this area
 - need to teach folks how
- Fitness activities in schools
- More nutrition education in the classroom
- Help people make healthier choices and have those choices available
- Impact school-aged children eating habits
- Exercise and nutrition for children
- Healthy habits for school-aged and preschool children and families
- Nutrition information on a selection of foods – fresh, frozen, etc
- Preventing chronic diseases – increase healthy habits
- Nutritious, diverse meals to schools with little funding
- Serving local food in our cafeterias
- More natural, fresh alternatives in front of kids
- Changing school culture - rewards/fundraising should be healthy choices
- Kiosk of fresh fruits and vegetables in schools
- Educate about larger issues of population control, family planning, reproduction, and overpopulation rather than how to feed people – non-profits and schools

Anti-hunger/low income:

- Food stamps at farmers markets
- State needs to increase food stamp dollars
- National WIC Association – Implement mandatory purchases of fruits, vegetables, and grains
- Decentralize our current food system – regional and focused
 - reduce need for fossil fuel for transportation
- Logistics of getting excess food from farmers market, restaurants, etc. to food pantries
- Make food stamps worth more to be able to buy fresh/buy local
- Federal nutrition programs need to be fully funded to ensure access
- Concern regarding vegetable plants and throwing them out at the end of the season. What can be done with the plants, can they be shared with community organizations?
- Need to organize a program to pick-up excess farmer produce and give to food bank/pantry.
- Gleaning programs/possibilities
 - Have Harvesters’ volunteers be gleaners at farmers markets
 - Food Rescue Program at Harvesters – pick-up excess food from restaurant buffet lines. The Food Rescue Program could be model for a gleaning program.
- Implement a sign-up process for recipients at community outreach organizations to do volunteer work in the garden (if applicable) to teach gardening skills.
- Address the root causes of poverty

Awareness/Advertising:

- Need a paid lobbyist in Washington D.C.
- Expand audience
 - Advertising
 - Community dialogue
 - Media/public service spots
- Access to healthy food
 - Where is it? – improve visibility
 - Address transportation issues
- Tours of area farms
- Promotion of locally grown food
- Need to provide parents resources to find local, fresh food and education tools
- Encourage distribution companies to create demand for local foods
- Schools may not be the answer - use different angle such as 4H or Boy/Girl Scouts
- Connect with the media to spread the message
 - Walt Bodine
 - Environmental tie-ins
- Identify modes of dissemination
 - Gyms and community centers
 - Safety net clinics
 - Kansas City public libraries
 - Church – urban and rural
- Increase awareness about hunger issues and opportunities to collaborate
- Think about what “local” means and how the definition and message is conveyed to the public, schools, and institutions. Frame the message so local vs. standard shows the true cost of food to change the perception that local is more expensive
- Persuade pastors that sustainable food production and healthy eating is a spiritual and moral priority
- Coalition/Council “identity,” including website and media outreach

Farm Bill:

- We need to make the Farm Bill relevant to everyone
- Put top links to Farm Bill information on KC Healthy Kids website
- Provide legislator contact information and sample letters on KC Healthy Kids website
- Need to learn more about Farm Bill
- Need more subsidies for diverse crops
- Money for farmer development – work with state government to fund extension program
- Producer, processor, distributor, realtor, educator for public
 - all need to be addressed together
- Information about the Farm Bill's impact on schools
- Lobby Representatives

Partnerships:

- Merge nontraditional partners – for example:
 - Powell Gardens, KC Food Circle, and KC Healthy Kids
- Identify opportunities to address eating and food behaviors within businesses, churches, corporate cafeterias
- Food Service Director partner with farmer
- Envision how Anti-hunger advocates and Sustainable Agriculture work together – work with small scale growers to buy surplus produce or work with Harvesters to be reimbursed for shipping to get produce to market, develop routes to include small growers.
- Partner gardeners with a family that wants a garden plot.

Documentation:

- Number of questions and discussion around nutrition studies and possibility that reports are already completed and available. Group would like to see consolidated resource list
- Impact of healthy food - documentation of local efforts
 - must show how Wellness policies are making an impact in education and attendance
- Oakhill and Bistro Kids collaboration needs a process of documenting changes in behavior based on diet changes. Discussion that this documentation has been done although not specifically at Oakhill. How important is it to show changes specifically at Oakhill? Important because it is a model for this region.
- Label school districts on website and district folders and show successes of what has been done to get children to change attitude regarding rewards, eg. using things other than food for rewards or using healthy food for rewards
- Look for champions of Wellness Policies
- Suggestion of creating a reward program for “best” of the year when school or institution develops a healthy eating program or recognize leaders who are taking strides to change or improve nutrition programs within their organization.

Policy/Regulation:

- Move wellness forward in schools
 - Make Wellness policies more meaningful and a mandatory set guidelines
- Address sanitation issues – food safety
 - Check with environmental health specialists

- Approach School Boards/Districts - need buy-in at the district level - must be ready to make a change in attitude
 - Education policy – require education on farming - help people feed themselves
 - Encourage and support institutions to come up with nutrition related policies in the workplace
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Resources:

Local Growing:

- Growing Growers (<http://www.growinggrowers.org/>)
- Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture - KCCUA (<http://www.kccua.org/>)
- Kansas City Community Gardens (<http://www.kccg.org/>)
- Commodity Programs – reinforce need for subsidies for fruits and vegetables
- Kansas River Valley Foods – for institutional networking tool (<http://www.kansasrivervalley.com/>)
- Missouri Exchange – (<http://www.missouriexchange.com/>)
- Cross-Lines Community Outreach – has facilities/kitchen to process produce – could rent it to farmers.

Schools/Kids:

- Oakhill Day School – Suzanne McCanles – Farm to School model w/ Bistro Kids
- Bistro Kids
- The Food Studies Institute (FoodStudies.org)
 - Food is Elementary Program
- Healthy Kids Challenge (<http://www.healthykidschallenge.com/>)
- PE4Life (<http://www.pe4life.org>)
- School Wellness policies
- National Farm to School Program – (<http://www.farmtoschool.org>)

Anti-Hunger:

- National WIC Association
- Food Policy Councils – use other FPCs as models and inspiration
- East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corporation – ECKAN (<http://www.eckan.org/>)
- Harvesters' solution programs (<http://www.harvesters.org/>):
 1. Childhood hunger – Kids Cafe, Kids Kitchen, BackSnack
 2. Senior – Mobile Food Pantry
 3. Feeding families- Network of agencies, Mass Distribution, Holiday Meals
 4. Healthy eating - nutrition education, Project Strength

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- Discussion strengthens the commitment and need
 - Additional knowledge equals power for change
 - better understand the scale of problem
 - Need an active school to present their process/program
 - The process is set-up to maintain the status-quo. Schools follow a standard process to get the most for their dollar. Would cutting out the middle-man reduce the cost of getting local food into schools and food banks?

- Waivers: rather than getting money or commodities, give waivers to buy local
- How does the government choose the companies who distribute commodities? Why don't they use local companies?
- Mission in schools: "educate the whole child"
- Wants Oakhill to go 'green', hired an Environmental Specialist
- In the Fall of 2007, Physical Education will be 5 days/wk
- Wellness policies – move to implementation of fresh foods for kids
- KC Food Chitaqua
- Grant money needs to be available in the Farm Bill to promote creative solutions
- Offering fresh produce from their own garden – fresh fruits and vegetables
- Jeanette Collier – Lawrence, KS – gleaning program
- Johnson County Community College – certificate program for growers