



AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP

Meeting Minutes – December 1, 2014

Attendees:

Janet Bearden	Virginia Food Enterprise Centers (via teleconference)
Steve Cook	VA Department of Health
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
Ben Craig	Virginia Food Enterprise Centers
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Kate Gibson	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Kit Johnston	Rural Madison
Don Looch	Piedmont Environmental Council
Kenner Love	VA Cooperative Extension – Rappahannock County
Ken Meter	Crossroads Resource Center (via teleconference)
Patrick Mulhern	Town of Culpeper
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County
Carl Sachs	Culpeper County
Carl Stafford	VA Cooperative Extension – Culpeper County

Economic Analysis Initial Results – Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center

Copies of the initial results of the economic analysis for the region's food system were distributed (see attached). They include only the data that will appear in the appendix of the final report, not the narrative analysis. The counties and cities included in the analysis represent the food system as defined by the work group.

Consultant Ken Meter provided an overview of the results via teleconference. Highlights included the following:

- Approximately 15% of Virginia's farms are within the region's food system and of those 50% are less than 50 acres.
- Farmers sold \$347 million of crops and livestock in 2012; however, 72% of farmers reported a net loss. This is higher loss than Ken usually sees in his studies conducted across the country and more than the state average of 62%.

- 820 farms sold at least \$5.6 million of food products directly to consumers, which is a 28% increase in the number of farms selling direct compared to 2007. As a percentage of farm product sales, this is five times the national average, although still only 1.6%.
- While consumers spend \$7.5 billion on food expenditures, \$6.8 billion is spent on food produced outside the food system. Combined with farm production losses, this amounts to a total loss of \$7.1 billion of potential wealth lost to our communities each year.

Michelle Edwards noted that Rappahannock-Rapidan region was mistakenly used instead of food system. This will be fixed for the final draft. The report title will instead be Northern Virginia Piedmont Local Farm & Food Economy.

Three public meetings will be held February 3rd and 4th to present the results of the economic analysis and the stakeholder interviews, with locations in Fauquier, Culpeper and Madison Counties (locations to be determined). Ken will deliver the presentations, and Michelle Edwards will lead a group discussion afterwards to serve as three of the six focus group meetings required by the grants.

Food System Interviews and Focus Group Discussion– Attendees

Ken Meter will be conducting in-person stakeholder interviews to support the economic analysis January 13-16, accompanied by Michelle Edwards. Michelle will be coordinating the interviews and is looking for suggestions on potential interview candidates. Ken recommended a range of agricultural producers and large-scale buyers, particularly innovative producers and those who are actively seeking to scale up.

Attendees discussed potential candidates and provided initial recommendations. Michelle will send out an email request following the meeting with further suggestions due by December 5th. Upon reviewing the suggestions, Ken and Michelle will pick a total of ten to interview.

Michelle is also looking for existing agriculture-related meetings to piggy back on for the six focus group discussions. The timeframe for the meetings is January – March 2015. She will also include this request in the email.

Next Meeting

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on Monday, January 5, 2014, at 1:30-3:30pm in the RRRC Conference Room.