

Regional Food System Plan Public Meeting Comments

Warrenton - November 13, 2013

- Determine the number/source of commercial kitchens in the region
- Survey large scale consumers (i.e. hospitals, grocery stores, schools) to determine their needs
- Shorten project time line to less than 2 years; hire/involve more people to do the work
- Tie improved health to agriculture economy (greater demand and availability of local foods = lower health care costs)
- Will the focus be narrowed eventually? An advocate(s) is needed to ensure recommendations are implemented
- Include review of local ordinances in assessment of current regional resources/constraints
- Include one or two questions on agritourism in producer survey
 - What types of activities would help farmers?
 - What are they currently doing?
- Assess demographics of local food consumers

Culpeper - November 14, 2013

- Local = Safe? Promote environmentally safe products (organic)
- How will you develop a contact/network listing of producers and how will you share information with producers who are on time constraints and cannot attend meetings? We will work with our current contacts (i.e. PEC, VA Cooperative Extension) to expand our contact list, but would appreciate attendees sharing their contact lists
- If we offer focus groups for producers, when is it best to schedule them?
 - Early morning timeframe
 - Use Technology to share with those who cannot attend (ie. Moving Meadow Farms hosted an Ag debate at Tech Box store and streamlined the debate)
 - Ag producers who aren't tech savvy are aging out (a few other attendees argued that the majority producers are still not tech savvy)
- Who are you targeting? All food system stakeholders; food system plan may narrow that scope
- Institutions—increase purchase of local foods

- Address lack of full functioning kitchens in schools
- Will require changing current attitudes
- Distribution is key to success in the region as well as having a champion for the cause
- Data Gaps—inventory should include a listing of what infrastructure already exists (ie. Culpeper Farmers Cooperative purchases and processes 100%. They purchase from local producers and sell locally.)
- VA Dept of Statistics—through VDACS—was suggested to be used to develop the surveys
- Need to assess where the current distribution centers are in the region?
- Strategic Plan needs to be interactive-
 - Use technology to advertise
 - Piggy back off of other AG/Consumer meetings and events in the community
 - Farm Bureau offered to host
- Land Use Data could be used to identify ag producers in the region
- Plan should include strategies that incentivize consumers to purchase local foods
- Analysis should capture ripple effect of purchasing local foods and used to get buy-in from Institutions who have budget constraints
- Branding—too many brands already? Developing a regional brand will not necessarily be a recommendation of the food system plan. The participants will need to make that determination.
- Transparency and Farm Identification is part of the education process
- Grant funds from CDBG
 - Phase 1—planning grant money has been received
 - Phase 2—TBD (amount awarded for full project after Phase 1 is complete)
 - End result—Food System Plan that will list projects to implement and recommended policy changes
- Make use of existing data—don't waste money duplicating efforts
 - Blue Ridge Produce
 - Rappahannock Farm 2 Schools Planning Grant
- Will there be consumer surveys? No, will use existing data available.
 - Can have a disconnect between what consumers say they want and what they will actually buy
 - Demand for local products is very high-lots of data to support it

- Orange Farmers Market not as successful as they had hoped and are trying to determine why
- Madison Farmers Market included an educational component—offer events, free samples, provides an “experience”/ “event”—Location deliberate. Their marketing strategy of their Farmers Market is different than what Orange is doing
- Who will adopt/use end product/plan? Local government, Institutions, Chambers of Commerce, etc.