

Ohio Food Policy Council
Minutes
February 2, 2009
Ohio Department of Agriculture

Council members in attendance: Brian Williams, Farmland Preservation Consultant, , Richard Mason, Ohio Restaurant Association, , Shari Baker, Ohio Department on Aging, Cecelia Torok, Ohio Department of Education, Sister Christine Pratt, Catholic Charities, Casey Hoy, OSU-OARDC, Carol Goland, Ohio Ecological Food & Farming Association, Joe Logan, Ohio Farmers Union, Greg Hargett, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Amalie Lipstreu, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Chris Henney (for Jack Fisher) Ohio Farm Bureau, Chuck Kirchner, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Lewis Jones, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Mark Forni, ODA Office of Farmland Preservation, Michael Hockman, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Jennifer Scofield, Health Impact Consulting, Kara Wentz (for Paul Fraunholtz – ODJFS), Dave Wible, The North Market, Hugo Melgar-Quinonez, OSU-Human Nutrition, Katie Myers, Countryside Conservancy.

Absent: Robert Marx, AVI Food Systems, Melissa Stanford, Ohio Department of Development, Tom Jackson, Ohio Grocers Association, Shandell Jamal, Governor's Office of Faith Based & Community Initiatives, Dr. Ronald Copeland, Kaiser Permanente, Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks, Bret Layman, Layman Dairy, Tom Price, Price Farms Organics, Ellen Mee, Ohio Environmental Council, Elizabeth Lind, Ohio Department of Administrative Services, Martin Tremmel, Ohio Department of Health, Ken Kopycinski, Ohio Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, Jim Chakeres, Ohio Poultry Association, Howard Sacks, Kenyon College, Deb Rausch (for Randy Hunt) USDA Rural Development,

Chairman Hargett called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm. The minutes were approved without changes.

Amalie Lipstreu provided an update on the listening sessions held so far. Sessions have been held in Northeast Ohio – Food Congress, Northwest Ohio - OPGMA Congress, Central Ohio-OEFFA Real Food Chapter, Central Ohio – Holmes County OSU Extension. The notes from those listening sessions will be analyzed with comments directed to appropriate OFPC task forces. Some of the recurring themes from those sessions are: a desire for more small scale food processing locations around the state, more education around the regulations for food processing and retail sales, and the use of more cooperatives in purchasing and distribution.

There will be a meeting for all of those involved in or investigating the establishment of Food Business Incubators in Ohio. The goal of this meeting is to map all of the existing and proposed facilities. Leslie Schaller will share information on different models and scales as well as issues around funding and continued operational support. The meeting will be held February 18th from 10-12:00 noon at the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Interested parties should contact Amalie for more information.

Amalie also shared that two of the three task forces would be presenting goal recommendations to the Council. As the Market Connections task force had a meeting to capture local food stories for future marketing efforts they will not have their goal recommendations until the next full Council meeting.

Chairman Hargett asked ODA's Chief of Food Safety- Chuck Kirchner to give the Council an update on the peanut butter recall. There have been over 500 cases of salmonella (77 in Ohio) with 8 deaths including one in Ohio. Peanut Corporation of America is the source of contamination. The state communicates with local health departments who can remove the product locally. There has been a total of 65 food recalls in the past two weeks. Mr. Kirchner stated that this reveals vulnerability in the food system.

Task Force chairs presented reports:

Agricultural Viability – Brian Williams

There has been considerable discussion in the task force about increasing the food processing capability in the state. Some important broader goals are more difficult to define. Examples of broad goals discussed were ensuring that farmers received a living wage and had access to markets. Given the work that has been done in the task force over the past six months the group settled on three very discrete goals for the Council:

1. Retain and expand local food processing capacity in the state of Ohio by 15% by 2015.
2. Expand poultry processing and flash freezing capacity to new and underserved producers by a minimum of one unit each on line by 2010.
3. Develop a minimum of one food business incubator within a region that has the capacity potential.

Healthy Food Access – Ceclia Torok

Cecelia worked with the task force to develop and refine a logic model to guide the work of the task force into the future. The model includes an identification of stakeholders, objectives, outcomes of the task force as well as outcomes for the full Council.

The task force worked over the past two meetings to identify a healthy food access goal. Two goals are recommended for adoption by the full Council.

1. Identify rural and urban food deserts in Ohio by December 31, 2009 and decrease these areas by 10% by providing access to healthy local foods by 2015.

2. Increase the number of schools using the national farm to school program by a minimum of 50 schools by 2015.

Leslie mentioned that she has data and has been working on identification of rural food deserts in three counties in Southeast Ohio. She will be in contact with Jill Clark from the Center for Farmland Policy Innovation who is working on the rural food desert study for the entire state.

Amalie shared that the Department of Agriculture has dedicated a minimum of \$20,000 a year over the next two years to assist Ohio farmers' markets in developing the infrastructure necessary to do electronic benefit transfer (EBT) for the Ohio Food Assistance Program provided through the Department of Job & Family Services. Only 11 out of approximately 150 Ohio farmers' markets currently process EBT. Grants of up to \$1,000 are available to Ohio farmers' markets to run phone or electric lines, develop scrip or tokens and promote that they can now process the food assistance benefit.

There was some discussion of the WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) utilization at Ohio markets. According to Shari Baker, the SFMNP is approximately seven years old and has had a very high level of utilization in the state. Ohio is third in the nation in the appropriation of funds into this valuable program. 1.7 million dollars in coupons were issued to seniors in 37 counties during 2008. Seniors are issued \$50 worth of \$5 coupons that can be redeemed between May and October at senior centers, farmers' markets or farm stands. Eligible seniors are at 185% of the federal poverty rate.

Farmers interested in participating in the SFMNP must be pre-approved to accept the coupons and then are reimbursed through the area agencies on aging. Shari has requested more federal funds to expand the program into other counties. She is also very interested in being able to issue a debit card type of system that can be utilized as well. Any potential funding source ideas can be forwarded to Shari Baker.

Chairman Hargett mentioned that the resources used to expand the utilization of the food assistance at Ohio farmers' markets was through the Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) program. It is projected that over \$900,000 will be available in 2009 and over 1 million in 2010. ODA will be issuing request for proposals for those funds. The purpose of SCBG is to promote the specialty crop industry in Ohio.

Market Connections- Dave Wible

Dave gave an overview of the last two meetings of the task force which included a distribution panel and a local foods marketing meeting. Some local food stories were identified at the

meeting at ODA on January 22nd. Despite the realization that state funding for a public education and marketing campaign for Ohio foods is not possible at this time, creative marketing efforts will continue to be supported by the task force.

The distribution panel held in December included representation from retailers, distributors and restaurateurs. There was a strong appreciation for the work of the Ohio Food Policy Council and a feeling that support for producer education on good agricultural and handling practices and appropriate levels of insurance would be beneficial. Dave brought up a concern that was aired about levels of regulation around the establishment of new artisanal cheese businesses.

According to the Chief of ODA's Dairy Division – Lewis Jones, twelve new cheese processors have been established (10 in 2008). He felt the question was more one of targeted investment. It was also felt that we needed to assist these new businesses with developing a sound business and marketing plan.

Jennifer Scofield shared an example from the City of Cleveland where market gardeners and urban farmers are listed as “qualified small businesses” and are eligible for \$3,000 forgivable loans. There will also be consideration of city legislation to authorizing beekeeping and chickens within the city limits.

Brian Williams also shared an example of a Wayne County farmer who attended the local foods marketing meeting. His farm is bisected by route 71 and he is interested in setting up a farmers market at the rest stop that is located on route 71. Brian will follow up on how to support this idea in the Agricultural Viability task force.

Leslie summarized what she felt are the most important services we can provide to local farmers and food entrepreneurs- access to markets, capital, processing infrastructure, product innovation and workforce training. We need to maximize resources and connect people with resources more efficiently.

Food System Assessment – Casey Hoy

Since the task force will not have resources to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Ohio food system, bits and pieces of that assessment are being pursued by various researchers as they can fit this work into existing research projects. Jill Clark is doing some mapping for the Council in addition to the rural food desert work. The task force has changed its structure in that the focus will be on a “research coordinating committee” that will meet on a quarterly basis pending the needed assessment of progress toward newly established goals of the Council.

Amalie mentioned a new report authored by Jeff Sharp- Associate Professor in Ohio State University's Social Responsibility Initiative. This biennial report surveys Ohioans' attitudes about agriculture and local food. Included in the most recent survey is a question specifically related to the Food Policy Council. Respondents were asked how important it was for state and local governments to improve local food systems. 98% of those surveyed felt that it was either

very or somewhat important for governments to be working in this area. This validates the importance of the work of the Council to the general public.

Chairman Hargett shared that the work of the Council has assisted in identification of projects that may qualify for funding under the proposed federal stimulus package. He has met with Bob Hickey from the Economic Development Administration about some potential projects already.

Changes to the meeting scheduled were discussed. As much of the work of the Council takes place at the task force level the full Council will meet on a quarterly basis in the future.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 4th from 1:00-4:30 at the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Auditorium A. The meeting schedule for the rest of the year is as follows:

Monday, August 3rd- 1:00-4:30 at the Ohio State Fair (Cecelia Torok will check on the availability of the FFA conference center location at the fairgrounds).

And

Monday, November 2nd from 1:00-4:30 at the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Auditorium A.

Chairman Hargett adjourned the meeting at 2:30

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