

Regional Food System Group Meeting Notes
Wednesday, October 14, 2015

- **Workgroup co-chairs presented updates on group progress.**
 - **Production:**
 - Connecting farmers to landowners benefits young farmers that can't afford their own land. Landowners also benefit as they could lease the land at a cost.
 - Cold storage for farmers; DIY portable cooler plans and budget available
 - Non GMO feed is difficult to find in the Upstate and is quite costly. Survey is being conducted to determine where non GMO feed could be held, how much farmers would pay for the feed, and how much they would buy.
 - Educational campaign for farmers; 2-3 minute videos
 - **Processing:**
 - Characteristics for processing facility (zoning, waste removal, utilities); poultry processing is a target
 - Potential for mobile processing
 - Processing Needs for farmers are different for different markets
 - Costs and challenges of certifications (organic, USDA)
 - How can processing elements help in growth of production? Kill only facility, preservation using acidification, value added products
 - **Market:**
 - Increase opportunities for direct sales to consumers to maximize profits
 - Policies that farmers markets have – compiling database including list of markets and specific regulations of markets for a coordinated system and clear rules; farmers struggle with exclusion at markets
 - Promoting farmers markets to the general public
- **Attendees broke into three workgroups to continue working towards short term goals to enhance the Upstate's local food system.**
 - **Production:**
 - Group is working to set a meeting date of organizations already working on connecting landowners to farmers.
 - Looking into grant opportunities to build a portable cooler from the plans found by the workgroup. Would be used by an organization to show to farmers and educate the public on local food.
 - Will contact Clemson Extension about adding a video component to the classes they are already teaching to farmers.
 - Group will conduct survey to determine volume, location, and pricing for non GMO feed in the Upstate.
 - **Processing:**
 - Focus should be on improving the volume and availability of training for processors
 - The inventory survey of facilities that is currently on-going at Clemson will be able to inform quantities and volumes available for processing local products
 - GAP and Group GAP certification process
 - Creating a "How To..." guide for farming would be useful; an update to the CFSA policy manual may be beneficial
 - Create a contact list for specific certification programs:
 - Create task force to investigate and better define the gray area between Dept of Ag and DHEC on who inspects processing facilities.
 - **Market:**
 - *Compile institutional buyers' criteria (Hub City Co-Op, Francis, Marvins, Furman, Pelham Med, etc. including variety, packing and handling.*
 - *Publish market details and criteria*

- Target media outlets/vehicles currently reaching farmers and consumer groups, especially in rural areas to connect growers and farmers markets, and draw consumers
- increase awareness of programs such as: SNAP, senior vouchers, Wholesome Wave, etc. and encourage all farmers' market leadership to guide farmers towards edibility
- Retail locations (Dollar General, Spinx, etc.) and government organizations (DSS) can also be outlets to spread awareness of farmers markets and benefit programs for low income consumers
 - What benefits exist?
 - How to receive training and access to these programs?
 - How these benefits are promoted with beneficiaries to encourage farmers' market shopping?
 - How to assist/train farmers markets across the spectrum of market formats (ad-hoc, organized without staffing, staffed/infrastructure) of the Upstate more consistently offer these redemption programs?

Next Steps:

- **Workgroups will continue to meet and work towards goals using plans developed in the meeting.** Check your email for meeting announcements.
- **Lunch was provided by Green Lettuce located at 19 August Street, Greenville, SC 29601, beside Mellow Mushroom in downtown Greenville.** Make sure you visit the restaurant for great local food if you enjoyed lunch!
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