

HEALTH LEADERSHIP NETWORK  
Food Summit Planning Notes  
Friday, January 8, 2010

In attendance: Daniel Sueram, UC Davis Agriculture; Chuck March, Lake County Farm Bureau; Sky Hoyt, grower; Martin Squier, Food Policy Council; Debra Sommerfield, Lake County Economic Development; Jennifer McClendon, Network for a Healthy California; Susan Jen and Jackie Armstrong, HLN.

Susan provided an overview of Food Summit tracks discussed at other community meetings and a status report on the response to HLN's request for proposals for marketing services to promote the Food Summit and "Buy Local, Eat Fresh" campaign.

Susan explained that the primary factors influencing selection of a March date for the event included farmer and crop availability, and that the event would have to take place on a Monday if an Iron Chef competition was desired. She added that Julie Hoskins said that she would be happy to assist with organizing the competition and a kids' cooking activity.

Regarding speakers and/or plenary panelists who might be of interest to farmers, Sky suggested Patty Bruder, NCO; Scott Cratty, Mendocino County Farm Association; Tom Horner, Harvest Market owner. Chuck recommended CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura who could, among other things, address the impact of food safety requirements on small growers. During a discussion about small farm equipment limitations, Daniel suggested that local growers might consider utilizing washing stations at abandoned pear sheds as part of a local distribution system.

Susan said that she'd envisioned an evening program that would attract community members but that additional fresh food cooking events had been discussed by the Health Policy Council to target risk populations that would not necessarily attend the Food Summit.

In response to Sky's question as to what degree local experts would be invited to participate, Martin suggested that Clay Shannon and Jim Fetzer might be good breakout session leaders on the subject of diversification.

There was general support for idea of dedicating a portion of the Food Summit to a Meet Your Farmer-type trade show with farm exhibits that would allow prospective buyers to learn about local crops and establish relationships with farmers. Sky said, however, that HLN would need strong support from Chuck and Rachel Elkins to attract participation of farmers who are not members of Farmers' Finest.

Chuck said that a lot of growers rely on commercial distributors because they either don't want to or don't know how to market their own stuff. Susan mentioned that HLN planned to unveil an online ordering system that was expected to make it easier for growers to let people know what they had to sell and for buyers to learn what kinds of local produce was available. She said that eventually, the general public could be invited to order produce online.

During a discussion regarding local retail outlets, Sky encouraged HLN to recruit the managers of Bruno's, Hardester's and Riviera Markets to hear Tom Horner talk about his own efforts to support local growers and the potential on both growing and buyer sides. Jennifer McClendon suggested also contacting the produce manager of Oliver's Markets in Sonoma County. It was suggested that Bill Brunetti would be an effective ambassador to make local market contacts.

In response to Daniel's question about the role of CSA's in the overall food system, Sky said that the most successful CSAs are near urban areas and are often prepaid programs. Debra added that it may be necessary to divide the Food Summit program to accommodate differing interests of small vs. large operations.

Susan commented on the importance of figuring out how the influence of the Food Summit would be sustained beyond the event and grant term. Debra agreed, saying that a 2006 Agritourism conference had attracted a lot of farmers and generated a lot of enthusiasm but that enthusiasm waned without follow up to keep the program growing.

Following a general discussion about some growers perceiving Lake County's Local Food Assessment as having a sustainable "ax to grind," Susan reiterated that her mission is to promote the value of fresh food as "nature's pharmacy" in order to improve local population health and that she had endeavored to remain neutral on the subject of organic vs. nonorganic operations. She added that she saw HLN's role as facilitating communication between buyers and all local growers regardless of their farming practices.

The next meeting of the Food Summit Planning Group will be at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, January 22, 2010. Jackie will check on the availability of Conference Room B.

Meeting adjourned about 12:40 p.m.