

HEALTH LEADERSHIP NETWORK
CDFA STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES
MARCH 23, 2011 – 1:00 P.M.

In attendance: Steve Hajik, L C Ag Commissioner; Kristen Krohn, LC Farm Bureau; Debra Sommerfield, LC Economic Development; Rachel Elkins, LC UC Cooperative Extension, Teale Love, Specialty Grower, Susan Jen and Bonnie Schall, Health Leadership Network.

➤NOTE: Chuck March was unable to attend this meeting due to illness. The Lake County Farm Bureau Executive Committee sent Kristen Krohn to the meeting on his behalf.

FARM BUREAU ACTIVITIES UPDATE:

- **Contract for transportation –**
Susan discussed the contract that included Teale Love as a source for transporting produce. Hesitation from the Farm Bureau (FB) regarding the transportation contract was due to not having a south route established and the availability of funding. A proposed South County Route from the Central Distribution Point at Mt. Konocti Growers is being considered to encompass several drop points and having volunteers available to distribute the produce.

Rachael mentioned that General Produce Company is expanding their routes to Laker County. She suggested there might be more than one way for distribution and thought that multiple types of distributions should be looked into. Susan added that Cisco is also carrying local grown produce. Teale stated he would investigate those areas.

- **Contact with Hardester’s, Foods Etc., Ray’s, and Walmart –**
Susan and Teale met with Hardester’s and received a positive response from them to buy local produce. Susan continued to explore other institutions, Rays, Walmart, and Foods Etc. in South County. The other stores were also receptive to having Lake County products available for their consumers.

Teale had followed up with each of the grocery institutions. Hardester’s gave Teale a produce list highlighting their purchasing needs. Food’s Etc. is currently creating a list for him to review. Ray’s and Walmart are less likely to buy the produce due to their corporate structure and special handling needs.

Susan stated that the FB seems to have reservations in working with the institutions. She explained that they are experienced with the Online Farm Market and would like to continue with expanding the growth in that area, but while not opposed to engaging institutions, it is a venture into more unfamiliar territory.

Susan conveyed an idea the FB mentioned, of having a group of farmers meet with the receptive markets as a means to garner a “qualified” commitment from the markets and growers to ensure increased quantity of produce necessary to meet institutional needs. Teale intervened that the grocery institutions do not want to deal with a group; they prefer a one person Market Manager role. Debra suggested the farmers view Hardester’s supply and demand list for the upcoming season that Teale had worked out with Hardester’s. Kristen requested a copy of the list to send out to the farmers. Susan reiterated that an action step needs to be taken to bring institutions and farmers together.

Susan stated that an informal agreement would be valuable to both buyer and seller. Teale articulated that the agreement may in fact be a policy of having the grocery produce manager buy from the local growers first. The lead time needed is a week in advance notice for purchasing. Teale said there are concerns on both ends of the spectrum regarding the instability of produce prices that fluctuate almost daily. Competitive pricing is intense in the produce arena, but it is still thought to be feasible for Lake County products to be competitive and to be featured as a supplement in local grocery stores.

Teale expressed his concerns regarding the timeframe of the CDFA project and the decision process to move forward. Spring has officially begun and the season is upon us. Susan reiterated her concerns and voiced Sky Hoyts concerns that unless we get something in place we would lose the opportunity to increase productivity and consumption (two major grant goals) in the upcoming growing season.

- **Market Manager Role –**

It was specified that the Market/Manager (M/M) position would develop a South Route; set up and arrange all logistics required to establish drop points; trouble-shoot any issues that may arise; and eventually expand the route to the other areas within the county. This position would interface heavily with the current on-line system coordinator. The FB had identified a person for the MM position, but that person recently took another position. The FB is investigating another applicant that showed some interest. Susan stated the grant had allotted \$10k for transportation, which could be utilized to support transportation and provide funding for this position.

- **Promotion Strategies for Upcoming Farm Market Season –**

Susan passed along info from the recent FB meeting, that marketing will play a key part in the growth of the on-line system. Kristen is coordinating a Marketing Meeting this week for the upcoming season.

- **Sustainability Plan –**

Susan discussed the definition of sustainability in terms of a grant. Sustainability means that the project will be able to continue after the grant funds have been dissipated. Susan indicated Public Health confirmed that the CDFA Grant will permit a sustainability/reserve fund to allow funds to keep the project going past June 2012 when the grant term concludes. Susan indicated that the FB could possibly draw from the fund while the grant is operating. The monies would be generated by a “sustainability margin” from the growers or delivery fees.

It was clear that in order to move ahead with the project the current budget needs to be modified. Public Health requested a detailed plan from the FB with a new scope of service for state approval. The FB is proposing a plan that describes the “margin” needed to sustain the program over time, how the margin will be generated, how the sustainability fund will be set-up, and the process for how and when it will be utilized. The proposal will also include a plan and funds needed to expand drop points and transport produce to drop points. Public Health specified a minimum of two weeks or up to two months for the revised budget approval, but monies could be borrowed to get this portion of the project up and running for the upcoming season.

Further discussion concluded that the increase of individual customers and institutions along with the availability of crops are imperative in order to make this achievable and sustainable.

LOCAL FOOD GUIDE UPDATE:

- The Steering Committee reviewed the “Growing Practice Definitions” handout. Suggested changes were noted and will be made to the document to be included in the Local Food Guide. The organic and conventional definitions will be reviewed one more time by their authors.

SPECIALTY CROP PRODUCTION UPDATE:

- Steve indicated that there was 1.5 acre increase in Specialty Crops of Pomegranates. Steve also reported that 8 acres of hops (a fruit) have also been put into production.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.