



**Piedmont Triad Regional Food System:
Developing a Comprehensive Food System Assessment and Regional Food Council
Input Meeting**

Monday, November 20, 2017

2:30pm - 4:00pm || 1398 Carrollton Crossing Dr, Kernersville, NC 27284

Conference Call Option: (641) 715-3580, 466038 Or Join online:

join.freeconferencecall.com/community_food_strategies

The Piedmont Triad Regional Council and Community Food Strategies are working to build a regional network to provide structure for connection, alignment and collective action across the Piedmont Triad foodshed.

Desired Outcomes

- Shared understanding of the goals and need for a Regional Food System Assessment & Council
- Direct input on the process for community engagement and structure
- Confirmation of energy and interest from community partners

Attendees: Matthew Dolge: PTRC Director, Jason Kampworth: Foster-Caviness Buyer, Marcus Hill: Forsyth Community Food Consortium, Jose Abreu - Owner, Superior Foods in High Point & Greater High Point Food Alliance, Betty Huskins: Ridge-top Associations, Gini Knight: Community Food Strategies, Jesse Day & Joe Furstenberg, PTRC staff, Rhyne Cureton, NC A&T student & past staff at NCCE and farmer. John Ivey (will still like to be involved, but couldn't attend)

NOTES

Background / Overview

Update on what we've been working on and next steps:

- [Harvesting Regional Potential](#) - UNC-Greensboro report documenting regional food assessment materials and what a regional food council would look like - recommendations and background
- Need a regional food council to collaborate and align forces
- Need baseline data to go off of - need a comprehensive food assessment for the region to have data to move forward from and track progress
- Hoping to do those two things simultaneously
- We've had two regional meetings at PTRC - last summer we got a lot of great feedback on what a regional food council might look like
 - [July 2017 Piedmont Triad Food Councils Meeting Summary](#) - 2-page summary
- Want to move forward with this quickly so that we don't lose interest and momentum that we've already established
- PTRC can be a partner and resource to leverage, in addition to our local community expertise

- Eight food councils currently existing within the PTRC Region, which is the largest number of all Community Food Strategies six regions across NC. There are about 31 food councils across NC.
- In 2017, the Federal Reserve released [Harvesting Opportunity: The Power of Regional Food System Investments to Transform Communities](#), documenting the value of regional food systems. With the current interest locally and at the state and federal level, many funders will be interested in supporting this work.
- PTRC is set up well to take on this new task - so what can we do to create innovative strategies to build a system here and to provide guidance for others as they venture on this projects

How many other food assessments have been done - on the scale of what we want to do here in the Piedmont Triad? -

- [CONNECT Our Future: Food System Assessment Report](#). 2014 – ASAP, CEFS, CFSA
- [Southeastern NC Regional Food Systems Assessment: Local Food, Food Insecurity, Healthy Eating & Nutrition](#), Nov 2015.
- [Orange County Baseline Community Food Assessment](#) 2016.
- [Forsyth County's Community Food System: A Foundation to Grow](#). 2013.
- [Cabarrus County Food System Assessment](#), 2010.

Objectives:

- Establish an Assessment and Regional Food Council rolling within 2 years (that's the goal).
 - The Council needs this assessment as the first project, having some action behind the Regional Food Council.
 - Multi-sector involvement is critical, including farmers, distributors, retail and business

Two large things we have a lot of ideas about, nothing is hard and fast so we are going to slowly make progress until we have the funding to move forward with it

Models that might be aspirational for what we would like to put together: Florida Regional Council, Vermont - Burlington Food Council, Chesapeake Bay Food Shed/Food Network, MI Network of Local Food Councils

Potential Structure:

- Expert Panel (larger group 30)
- Steering Team/Regional Council (8-12 people)
 - Meet every month or every other month - virtually half the time (conference in)
- Coordinating Team: Community Food Strategies, PTRC, local food council staff/volunteers
- Work Groups: depends on what shakes out how we might develop and engage those groups

What sort of database of constituents to we have in the Piedmont Triad? - folks that have come to our meetings, and networks of the local councils, have some connections with farmers. Foster-Caviness network includes farmers, brokers, other buyers, retailers, restaurants 200-300 in the network. Jose - supermarket network and a few farmers, about a 200 people.

Important to engage the rural counties as well and to connect them with the larger group.

How would the assessment be useful for your community/business and help to fill in some gaps that you might have?

- Jose- food education and food branding and recognition of the local food brand - make that more authentic (Got to Be NC - state slogan), Piedmont Grown
- (Jason) a producer label that is based out of Hillsborough. But having a regional label or brand would give people a stronger sense of place.
- Jason - the definition of local varies a great deal. Big box - is the price doesn't work then they aren't going to go outside of the box or do anything different - the mainstream places aren't truly supporting local but what's important to them? They want direct store delivery and want farms to deliver to them and those are the largest costs for these farms. An issue that we could look to address, and Foster-Caviness has worked to address that but it is still an issue

Small farms get excluded by the big-box food retailers because they lack the infrastructure and capacity and cannot meet the retail price points that larger producers/farms can do.

Jesse: are there logistic examples that we could copy there?

Jason: Winston to Raleigh there's opportunities for transportation, but North side of 70 east of Rocky Mount or past Wilkesboro then it's so spread out and the density isn't there to help bridge those gaps so what's needed for make things happen in those areas are exponentially more difficult. Logistics networking

High County Food Hub example - Jason agrees that food hubs could be a good route, need one up in the Greenville area (Washington county), opened one in Ellerbe - but when you open one you need to have a network of farmers with different things available to sell there (the more items there the better).

Pilot Mountain Pride - Food Hub (what happened there)

- they put a lot into a storefront and local farm production took a hit to the weather and operated for 2-3 years (county owned)
- Rented dock space is a model that might work

Matthew - how do you deal with quality assurances?

- buying direct from the farmer (gap certified)
- Transaction are direct with the farmer at the food hub

Summary of bigger needs: branding, marketing, storage and transportation

Marcus - biggest needs: need to figure out aggregation/distribution system as a multi-county approach - coming out of Forsyth county - Marcus believes that would gravitate towards another "building" approach but something more long term might be better - maybe even starting with a smaller network upfront would be a better approach

The Farmer Questions

- it has to make sense for them, they need avenues to make money
- So will it not work on the large scale, should we have micro-hubs and approach this on a more hyper-local level
- Need to determine what the best scale approach is for our region and our region's farmers. (key question for the region's food assessment and how we can reach those farmers - we will prob need to go there. Get extension agents help).

Cool Hand Meats - what are the next steps for NC in supply chain infrastructure - what can we do?
Making sure that it can be more consolidated - confined within a county or two counties sharing a facility

- brings community farmers together - regional effort not county effort
- Livestock farmers - the processing infrastructure is very weak in NC

Piedmont Custom Meats - starting up in Asheboro - but that might not enough.

Randolph County - produces the 2nd largest amount of beef - but have to ship it out West because there aren't facilities to process them here

High Point Food Processor - possible connection

Matthew - it's really an issue of scale - and what is the best model for that to make economic sense for the farmer/operation

Processing in the region that everyone could use - meat and produce.

Reality note: Guilford County/Greensboro is providing 2,000 less lunches a day in Greensboro from private and charter schools, (that's \$4k a day going to food)

How can we demonstrate the need? What is the opportunity for value-add for someone to open that type of facility. Would be a big investment but a huge opportunity.

Sysco, US Foods, etc. - they don't process at their facility in NC.

There is a processing facility in Taylor, TN, that takes at least \$11 million to process NC produce, that could be retained here in the state.

In the study- what has economic potential? How can we capitalize on that and show what we are missing financially - and year round successes.

Issues:

Workforce (keeping things going year-round)

Could have two lines - grown and processed in NC and then a full line that pays the bills. That could at least be a starting point for that.

Matthew: there have been those folks who have made this intent but haven't been able to sustain it - we need to be open to having local options but also looking for at sustaining it with non-local

Is there an opportunity to expand out distribution to smaller levels but also using larger scale distribution to help fund some speciality crop sales, etc.

Foster-Caviness - 30 counties, military, prisons, colleges, Compass locations, and chain restaurants - they have that big footprint - NC/SC they have 2 sales reps. So they aren't doing direct local chef/restaurants (not speciality stuff).

Kernersville - Pride in the Morning * (need to research)

We need practitioners to make an assessment a reality, like Jason, Jose, John, and other entrepreneurs that are doing this every day. We also need more rural voices, chefs, farmers, institutional buyers. Jose has an idea of a chef connection through Homegrown Heroes.

Cultural Shift/Branding and Consumer Education - part of the role of the Regional Food Council

The Study - showing the economic shortfalls/potential. We'll need both of those aspects built into the structure of what we are going to do

The Study - corner store concept and putting fresh foods into the corner store - it's an interesting concept (it's a bit of throwback) - Greensboro is no. 1 in food desserts

Home Grown Hero's - helping students get involved with local community gardens

High Point is doing a lot of amazing things (Gini) even on the policy side of things, community gardens on vacant lots, community garden coordinator - funding for infrastructure under Cooperative Extension for that new staff person. (Announced 2 weeks ago).

Double Bucks - doubling the amount of snap vouchers (currently at Farmers Markets). Funding - Danville Regional Foundation. Might be a good impetus to go to foundations. Engaging the community foundations.

What kind of participation level you can see being feasible for yourselves and your network?

Potential Timeline & Next Steps

What do we need to have in place before we come back together?

- Tobacco Fund and Self Help to see what they can do to help
- Community Food Strategies - USDA Grant Funds - bear to spend and apply for
- Golden LEAF Fund - Blue Cross and Blue Shield - potential open doors there
- Next 2 months *

We need to explore access with Farmers - can do meetings at least until the end of March.

Need to have the Regional Food Council pretty well laid out.

Need an informal steering committee/task force to keep things moving forward.

Need a clear structure for the council, more formalized, to ensure the right representation and set-up of people. Do we need stipends, travel reimbursements, meetings at night?

Set up a google form - to get input. Ok to have a core group to get things going. We need someone with High Point - Carl will be willing.

- keep talking about who else needs to be at this table. Jose has an idea on a chef and hosts programs. More practitioners - school systems representation - rural counties they are the no. 1 food buyers.

Set up a timeline for when we want things to get rolling. Steering Team will stay separate for now, and over time those individuals may fold into the broader organization.

Next Fall as a goal to have the structure together in order to talk with bigger funders.

Assessment - would need a full-time staff with expertise to flush out that study and what our staff capacity looks like - someone dedicated contract-wise. NC-GT done next May.

Ag Census data will be out in February 2019, which aligns well with getting that study together.

Work together internally - we'll be working together virtually and will look towards early February for our next in-person meeting to strike as soon as we can. Gini will send out that doodle poll.

We'll try to have funding sources and requirements together - Golden LEAF and Blue Cross don't have a timeline but they also have annual budgets.

Healthy Corner Store Initiative * NC EDA

Existing Data

- [Local Farm & Food Profiles](#), 2007-2012 trends by county and by COG region, USDA Ag Census data
- [NC Local Food Supply Chain and Infrastructure Map](#)
- [Fruit & Vegetable Outlet Inventory](#)
- [Food Environment Atlas](#)