



SLO County Food System Coalition Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2017, 4:00-6:00 PM
Copeland Health Education Pavilion, French Hospital, SLO

Attendees: Josh Ayers, Dana Bakke*, Bryan Brown, Savana Brown*, Jaleah Brynn, Ellen Burke, Becca Carsel, Michelle Clamp, Joel Diring, Morgan Gaede*, Zaira Guzman*, Maggie Guzman*, Kylie Hensley, Andrea Keisler, Shannon Klisch, Teresa Lees, Melissa Lovett-Adair, Shannon Massey, Jen Miller, Jeff Nielsen, Rebecca Nielsen, Riley Robb*, Kayla Rutland, Cara Sacco*, Sara Scott*, Rochelle Stewart*, Alex Udd*, McKenna Wheeler*

*students from a Community Nutrition Class at Cal Poly

I. The Farm Bill & You by Kate Fitzgerald

Download the powerpoint at slofoodsystem.org/resources.

Kate's Background

- Lobbies in DC; currently working as an independent consultant in DC (since 2010) representing organizations working in sustainable agriculture, public health, and economic development through food enterprises.
- Previous work includes piloting WIC at farmers markets, working at the Sustainable Food Center in Austin, TX, publishing one of the first studies of food deserts, and working as a Senior Policy Associate at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition working on farm bill implementation, appropriations, child nutrition, etc.

History

- USDA created in 1862 during the height of the Civil War to invest in research, education, and training to support developing agricultural economy and increase production and distribution of food.
- In the 1930s, in response to the Depression and the Dust Bowl, the first farm legislation was passed to control prices and promote conservation practices (e.g., food stamps for a time, paying farmers to preserve sensitive areas).
- During WWII and the 1950s, rise of the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides to increase production. In 1946, the school lunch program was established.
- In 1961, JFK started a pilot food stamp project, which Johnson expanded in 1966; formalized in its current form in 1977. Also in the 1960s and 1970s: green revolution - high intensity production with high inputs of irrigation and chemicals to "feed the world."
- In mid-1980s, 1) farm crisis: farmers went into debt and lost their farms, devastating the rural economy; 2) emergence of food banks in response to hunger; 3) formation of 1st food policy council in Knoxville, TN to set up farmers markets and community gardens.
- In 1990s and 2000s, final movement away from supply control towards free market. The Farm Bill and USDA started making up for historically under-serving minority, women, and tribal farmers, investing in alternative energy, and developing the organic certification.

Current Farm Bill

- The Agriculture Act of 2014 was passed and signed in February 2014 by Obama and runs through September 30, 2018.
- 13 Titles of the Bill:
 - a. Commodities
 - b. Conservation
 - c. Trade
 - d. Nutrition
 - e. Credit
 - f. Rural Development - oversees several billions of dollars of grants per year
 - g. Research & Extension
 - h. Forestry
 - i. Energy
 - j. Horticulture
 - k. Crop Insurance
 - l. Miscellaneous
- 2018 fiscal year started October 1, 2017. Here are some themes for the last year of the current bill:
 - a. Farm income is down 51% from when it was passed in 2013. Cotton and dairy are especially low.
 - b. Non potable drinking water from ag runoff is an issue...who should foot the bill? Farms?
 - c. Immigration and Trade - Ag is one of the few economic sectors with a trade surplus. There is pressure to maintain exportation of commodity crops. Fewer immigrants from Mexico contributes to labor shortage, especially in produce and dairy industries.
 - d. SNAP spending in 2017 is about 38% of GDP and is predicted to decrease only slowly in the next 10 years; demand for SNAP is predicted to remain high.
 - e. In 2015, the poverty rate is 17% in rural areas, compared to 14% in metro areas, showing need for economic development in rural areas.
 - f. Proposed 21% budget cut to USDA.
 - g. Current spending (\$489 billion): (*amount and distribution has changed a lot over time*)
 - 80% nutrition,
 - 8% crop insurance - subsidies to cover 60% of the cost of insurance policies to provide stability from unpredictable risks (e.g., natural disaster),
 - 6% conservation - subsidies to promote conservation practices,
 - 5% commodities - subsidies that don't have good crop insurance,
 - 1% other - energy, horticulture, rural development, forest service.

New Farm Bill

- In hearings in the House and Senate.

Notes from Q&A

- Farm to School is funded by Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill, not the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill does have a program that allows states to source produce within the state.

- Proposed 21% cut to the USDA will not happen fully. Looking at 1) connection between energy assistance and SNAP benefit levels, 2) categorical eligibility, and 3) work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents.
- WIC and FVC (fruit & vegetable checks) are in the Child Nutrition Act and are not affected by the Farm Bill.
- Avoid stereotypes that conservatives don't care about poor people.
- Avoid sounding preachy and ignorant when promoting progressive, small-scale agriculture; be sensitive to rural economies, climate-appropriate limitations, etc.
- Members of congress listen to constituents - phone calls, invites to events.
- Take listening sessions and hearings seriously. Show up.
- There are a couple bills coming up that we might want to support: 1) Local Farms Act - supporting local and regional ag; 2) Reauthorize FINI - market match, etc.

II. Announcements

- WORK GROUP: Farm to School - Tri-County Growing Edible Education Symposium has been postponed until March 2-3, 2018. CA Thursdays and smarter lunchrooms are also active.
- Jeff (via Becca) - Slow Money SLO filed for non-profit status. Gathering on November 14 with local restaurants.
- Bryan - presenting about Farm to Preschool at a conference at Lake Tahoe next week
- Shannon - HEAL Summit in Santa Barbara in early November looking at the built environment and workplace wellness. \$50 registration. Event is in Buellton, you can carpool with Shannon if interested. Visit livewellsbc.org for more info.
- Joel - See Community Food Project grant update (1st year overview summary) posted at slofoodsystem.org/resources. The FSC is the convening body for the grant.
- WORK GROUP: EBT at Farmers Markets - Developing an updated poster (update location in Atascadero) about this option with DSS to distribute through schools. (Ecology Center has templates available.) Looking at expanding the program to CSAs, exploring associated technical difficulties.
- WORK GROUP: CalFresh Alliance - 3 focus areas: 1) awareness (user-friendly and accurate enrollment instructions), 2) access (eliminate barriers to enrollment), 3) text message notifications for reminders about appointments, etc.
- WORK GROUP: Farm to Market - Decided not be a work group anymore because work overlapped with Farmers Guild, which seems like a better group to carry on the initiatives (e.g., farmer buyer mixers).

III. New Logo

- Ellen's landscape architecture students made six logo options; we voted in favor of two of them in April. Emily Wilson, a graphic designer, made a third option for us to consider. Ellen notes that the two student logos are perhaps too complex to be scalable, but that she planned to simplify them.
- Applications: Logo will be used from letterhead to a banner.
- Feedback: perhaps newest logo option is too militaristic and too vertical; circular or horizontal might be easier to work with; like the symbols in the first two options; don't need date established

- Motion: Ellen will make updates and we'll move forward with adopting a new logo.