



Mission: Promote a sustainable food system that is equitable, profitable, resilient, and health-promoting in the County of San Luis Obispo.

Vision Statement: San Luis Obispo has a thriving, sustainable, and local food economy, and every resident has access to fresh, nutritious food without compromising the ability of the system to meet the needs of future generations.

Meeting Minutes

UCCE Auditorium

2156 Sierra Way, SLO

Tuesday, April 17, 2018

9:00am – 11:00am

Attendees: Jaleah Brynn, Ellen Burke, Becca Carsel, Bryan Chen, Mary Ciesinski, Jennifer Codron, Cristina Connolly, Dagmar Derickson, Greg Ellis, Kamala Ersson, Laurel Goins, Kylie Hensley, Kathleen Karle, Andrea Keisler, Caleb Kim, Amanda Lathrop, Jen Miller, Christine Nelson, Erin Primer, Dayna Ravalin, Jeta Rudi Polloshka, Patti Toews, Haley Trengove, Betian Webb, Emily Wilson

I. Announcements

Christine Nelson, Cal Poly - Received a grant to fund a food hub and community garden on campus.

Amanda Lathrop, Cal Poly - Working with a food waste research project through the Food Science Department at Cal Poly that received a USDA grant to cover tuition costs for six students to study food waste and get their masters degree. They are focusing on the production aspect of food waste and are looking for collaborative partners.

Erin Primer and Laurel Goins, Food Service Directors for SLCUSD and Lucia Mar, respectively - Organizing food programs for this summer. Contact them if you are interested.

Betian Webb, YouthWorks - Looking for volunteers to teach cooking classes for the young people participating in her job-skills training program at Affordable Housing Paso Robles.

II. Panel discussion of local food waste prevention initiatives

Patti Toews, SLO County Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA) - IWMA is the hub for resources and information on how to responsibly dispose of any type of waste in the county. There are 3 laws requiring cities and counties to divert 75% of solid waste from the landfill. A new anaerobic digester facility is being built that will process 100 tons of food waste and green waste per day and turn it into compost. There is a high demand for compost in the County, and there are already 3 year contracts in place to buy all of the compost produced by the facility. IWMA teaches zero waste workshops and facilitates composting programs in schools throughout the County and also works with businesses to divert food waste from the landfill. One of the biggest barriers to composting food waste is the "ick" factor. But it is important to compost food waste because as it decomposes in the landfill, it emits methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change, and the organic material in the food does not get returned to the soil.

Tim Parker, Food Bank Coalition of SLO County - Many food banks are part of the nonprofit Feeding America that has agreements with retail chains to rescue food from the landfill and distribute to people who are food insecure. In 2017, the SLO Food Bank rescued 1.85 million pounds of food from retail stores. Food Bank employees operate a fleet of refrigerated box trucks to pick up the food and bring it back to their warehouse where volunteers sort it to be distributed at 60 public distribution sites. The Food Bank also partners with other nonprofits that provide food pantries so they can pick up from their local retail stores directly. Challenges for this type of food recovery program is that nonprofits can end up shouldering the burden of a social imperative without being supported with government funding to help cover the expenses of maintaining the fleet of refrigerated trucks, paying for workers comp, etc. But public agencies are starting to acknowledge how the work of nonprofits fits into their missions and open up new funding opportunities. For example, the SLO Food Bank was recently awarded a CalRecycle grant to help fund their grocery recovery program.

Roxanne Sanders, GleanSLO - GleanSLO was started as a grassroots community group in 2010 and joined the Food Bank in 2013. The program has a staff of 3 and works with volunteers to harvest excess produce from farms and backyards that is visually unappealing or not profitable to harvest. Last year they rescued over 270,000 pounds.

Greg Ellis, One Cool Earth - One Cool Earth is a nonprofit that coordinates school gardens and educational programming in 18 schools throughout SLO County and hopes to expand to have a presence at all schools in the County. Students participate in a microcosm of the planetary system and learn about how they impact their environment. One Cool Earth also facilitates school composting programs where they

feed food waste to worms. Schools can generate 50-150 pounds per day of food waste and can save thousands of dollars per year by implementing recycling and composting programs. Growing their own food in the garden eliminates the need for packaging, refrigeration, transportation. When Greg hears the term food waste, he thinks of plastic food waste packaging that ends up in the ocean. One of One Cool Earth's main funding sources is federal marine debris programs.

Jen Miller, SLO Public Health - A majority of food waste comes from individual households, not institutions or grocery stores. The United States is far behind in consuming what we grow. Different groups, such as the Public Health Institute, the Dairy Council of California, CalRecycle, and the CDFA are coordinating to make food waste prevention a movement and have released a Communications Guide for California Food Waste Prevention Week, available for download on the SLO FSC website:
http://www.slofoodsystem.org/uploads/1/8/9/1/18918029/fwpw-communications-guide_2-8-18.pdf

This year Food Waste Prevention Week was March 5-9, but we only got notice in January, so there was not much time to coordinate. Perhaps we can collaborate and plan ahead for next year and use the Communications Guide for coordinated messaging across our organizations and work groups?

(Erin Primer from SLCUSD says school breakfast week is the same time, perhaps a zero waste breakfast in 2019?)

Dr. Jeta Rudi Polloshka, Cal Poly Agribusiness - What is an accurate definition of food waste? Jeta is working on a conceptual paper researching how to define food waste and why there is such a wide range of estimated amounts of food waste from different organizations such as the EPA and FAO. The focus of the study is to: 1) Provide a definition of food waste that focuses on food actually wasted, rather than food that is removed from the supply chain, 2) Provide a systematic way to think about the cost of food waste, considering the stage at which the waste occurs, and 3) Document points in the life cycle of food items at which policy makers can intervene. In discussions of food waste, there is often an underlying assumption that all food should be eaten, but there are other productive uses for food, such as becoming compost. The different steps in the food supply chain - production, processing, distribution, consumption - all have their own associated costs to be considered. In developing countries, most food waste is in the production, processing, and distribution stages. In developed countries, most food waste is in the consumption stage. In developed countries, we have the technology and transportation infrastructure to store and ship food and there is the cost of time at the consumer level: consumers shop less often and want to buy enough, so they buy more than they need.

Open Discussion:

- Greg - suggests joining My Job Depends on Ag on facebook. The ag perspective of food is that food is cherished.

- Roxanne - Kids learn experientially not from statistics, e.g. trips to the landfill to see what happens to things that get thrown away.
- Patti - IWMA offers classes in zero waste throughout the County.
- Erin - Messaging so kids understand the connection between the food on their plate and where it comes from. Meeting the farmer, understanding the story builds respect into our food system. Reclaiming this connection is essential to having the internal motivation to prevent food waste. We need a common platform for more local messaging and storytelling about our farmers, connecting waste management, public health, education.
- Laurel - When she worked at Whole Foods in their prepared food section, it was their company policy to keep the platters of prepared food full because the consumer would perceive an empty platter as an indicator that the store was not profitable and start to shop elsewhere. Similarly, federal guidelines require school food programs to prepare a serving for each student, even if the food service director knows that only a fraction of those servings will be eaten, resulting in food waste.
- Jeta - How to incentivize consumers to not throw away food?
- Betian - Hotels shifted practices around not washing sheets every day to save water, using "green" marketing. Could grocery stores do something similar?
- Greg - Raising food prices would incentivize not wasting food
- Jen - Public Health does not currently do any direct education to homeowners about food waste
- Jen Codron - [Dana Gunders](#) wrote a book about food waste - The Waste-Free Kitchen.
- Patti - Jen provides waste audits to businesses.
- Dayna - Master Food Preservers teaches community about using preservation to prevent food waste.
- Greg - Specialty Crops Block Grant due in May. Meeting at the end of April to coordinate about ideas specific to schools.
- Jen - Local food marketing campaign as a strategy to help reincorporate farmers?
- Ellen - Has stories from local farmers from SLO MAP grant but doesn't have time to share them. Still has heartfelt interest though if the group has interest in reviving the effort to educate consumers.
- Greg - Shout out to support the SLO Natural Foods Co-Op on Victoria St. in SLO.
- Mary - With prepared foods, garbage collection service, etc. we are disconnected with how food is grown and where waste goes.

Future steps: Common messaging around sharing local farmers' stories, food waste working group

Next meeting: summer social in mid-July