



## **SLO County Food System Coalition Meeting Minutes**

April 18, 2017, 4:00-6:00 PM

Copeland Health Education Pavilion, 3rd floor auditorium, 1911 Johnson Ave, SLO

### **I. Farm-to-School: Local Food Sourcing in Public Schools**

Food Service Director Panelists:

- Laurel Goins, Lucia Mar USD
- Erin Primer, San Luis Coastal USD
- Christina Lawson, Coastal USD
- Jackie Bobsin, Templeton USD

The farm-to-school movement is growing nationwide with over 42,000 programs across the U.S. The USDA has resources available to help schools procure local, nutritious food and integrate school gardens and nutrition and agricultural education into their curriculum. Food service programs in public schools provide breakfast, lunch, and after school food. For some students, it is the only food they receive throughout the day.

The farm-to-school movement is gaining momentum in SLO County. The Food Service Directors from SLO County's 9 public school districts are building respect for the local food system, starting at their schools. They have formed a co-op to collaborate on sourcing their food locally and reclaiming cooking from scratch and are sharing advice, encouragement, and friendship. They're navigating USDA rules and regulations and connecting with local producers, such as Kandarian Organic Farms in Los Osos and Robin Song Farms in Templeton. They want to feed their students good, nutritious food to help them achieve and become healthy adults. Getting kids to eat good, local food and to grow some themselves helps them respect the food system as a whole, to know the hard work of growing food and to ask the story of what's before the grocery store. The students know when the food is local and have a closer connection to what they're eating and who grew and prepared it.

Most districts stopped cooking years ago, switching to serving pre-purchased processed foods. Now they are moving back to cooking, teaching staff how to cook from scratch and use knives instead of scissors.

The USDA has strict guidelines for buying food with federal money to make sure tax dollars are spent responsibly. The food service directors can currently make some small purchases direct from local farms, but to make larger purchases they need to prepare a formal bid, which takes a lot of time and effort. The directors are collaborating on this endeavor. They say the state of California is supporting them in the learning curve of learning how to spend federal money locally. For every dollar spent locally, 70% stays local. Food distributors are also getting on board to help the

districts buy locally as the market demand shifts. Harvest Santa Barbara put together a list of lower priced local, organic items specifically for food service directors rather than restaurants, and the Berry Man now provides a locally sourced list.

Lack of kitchen equipment is a huge issue for the food service directors. It's difficult to receive grant money to purchase equipment, and the directors say it's not unusual to have equipment that is 60+ years old and in constant need of repair.

The SLO FSC farm-to-school work group is planning a tri-county Growing Edible Education symposium on October 6&7. They are looking for people to sign up to lead a workshop, volunteer, or help sponsor the event. See details in flyer on FSC website (slofoodsystem.org).

## **II. Announcements**

- Liz, SLO County Public Health - Symposium on Food Systems and Public Health May 10-12 - [californiafood.org](http://californiafood.org)
- Jeff, Slow Money SLO - next meeting is at Oak Creek Commons in Paso on May 2 at 6pm
- Linda, SLO Public Health - They finally have a dietician to work on SNAP Ed and smarter lunchrooms for the CFP Grant
- Ellen, Cal Poly - One of her students drafted potential new logos for the coalition. She distributed them for us to vote on.
- Heather, Food Bank - The childrens farmers market at Lillian Larsen opened up to the entire school as part of the CFP Grant.
- UCCE - Harvest of the Month program is doing well.
- Victoria, One Cool Earth - Thinking of hosting staff training about how to use gardens better and is fixing garden infrastructure to build momentum and hosting "library on the lawn", food tasting while reading.
- Tree, CREEC Network - FARMGIRLS 2nd annual summer camp is July 11-14
- Roxanne, GleanSLO - harvested 42,000 pounds of produce; it was a slow winter because of the rain

## **III. Work Group Updates**

### **Policy - Jen & Kylie**

- Farm to School: Growing Edible Education symposium is October 6 & 7 with a Friday mixer and food service director cook off and a Saturday trade show. Register at [geesymposium.org](http://geesymposium.org).
- CalFresh Alliance: Working with DSS to increase participation rates for the county. One strategy is to provide same day CalFresh enrollment at MASH events for homeless and veteran populations.
- EBT at Farmers Markets: Working to increase # of farmers markets that accept EBT and apply for Market Match grants. Not much progress to report.
- (work group without a name yet): Working to increase local food purchasing within the county, in the goal forming process still. Contact Ellen at [eburke02@calpoly.edu](mailto:eburke02@calpoly.edu) for more information.

**Next Meeting**: Tuesday, July 18, 2017 - social activity and location TBA