



Network09

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST RURAL DEVELOPMENT • JUNE 2009

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Groundbreaking Conference Highlights Emerging Local & Regional Foods Issues

Over one-hundred stakeholders gathered on May 19-20, 2009 in Kerhonkson, New York to explore the research, what works, and what we still need to learn about local and regional food systems. To our knowledge, this was the first-ever major conference organized around the topic in the US. Eleven northeastern states were represented and the event also attracted individuals from outside the region. While most attendees came from the educational sector, other non-profit, governmental and commercial entities were also represented. All of the presentations made are available on the Center's website. We are still analyzing the evaluations, and formally measuring the networks that were formed at this event, but already know that participants appreciated both the opportunity to meet other interested practitioners and the broad and diverse perspectives that were presented.

Dr. Kate Clancy launched the conference with her presentation, *What Are We Talking about When We Talk about Local and Regional Food Systems?* She stressed that a review of these issues was urgently needed after nearly four decades of interest in local foods and rapidly growing bodies of research and commentary. Dr. Clancy went on to discuss the multiple meanings of food systems, confusion of global with US situations, important differences between

regional and local, conflation of local foods with direct marketing and sustainability, and the need for systems research. Her goals were to create a commitment by researchers and practitioners to clarify key concepts, to develop shared terminology allowing comparisons across studies and projects, and to conduct more interdisciplinary research. A key need documented at the conference was a systematic inventory of the largely uncoordinated applied work underway in different states.

Dr. Clare Hinrichs followed with *What Do We Know and What Do We Need to Know about the Community Impacts of Local and Regional Foods?* She suggested that the recent surge of interest in local and regional foods includes environmental, economic, nutritional, and social elements. However, many efforts to develop local and regional food systems assume that their benefits are assured and dramatic; most efforts give little consideration to possible downsides or trade-offs in local and regional foods. Dr. Hinrichs focused specifically on the assumption that local and regional foods help to build community. While many consumers have had positive experiences of community at farmers' markets or CSAs, the results of broader scale, more systematic research on community impacts of local

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LFC FEEDBACK

Local Foods Conference Participant Comments

"This conference served a large need for those of us who work in regional food systems research, and is to my knowledge the first conference of its kind to ever take place. What really made it special was that there were people from all over the country, and this in itself was the proof that the conference filled a very large void (people flew in from far and wide to be part of the discussion that was originally intended to be Northeast Regional in scope!). The conference especially served those of us who work across various topics of research, by providing a sort of "one stop shopping" for connecting to people and learning about specific research topics within food systems work; and was especially helpful to my work by giving me ideas and connections for making the case for what we do, to diverse audiences (policy, business, funders, etc.)."

Michelle F. Muldoon, Program Officer, Wallace Center, Winrock International.

"I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the Local Foods conference. It was one of the most useful gatherings that I have attended in a long time.

I hope that this will be the first in a series of conferences on the topic of local food system research."

Dr. Jennifer Wilkins, Director, Cornell Farm to School Research and Extension Program, Cornell University.

and regional foods are less straightforward. After examining the community-building expectations for local and regional foods, Dr. Hinrichs discussed relevant research findings on community interactions, family dynamics, social learning, and social equity and justice issues. She concluded with questions to guide future research and outreach.

Consumers of Local Foods: Civic Minded or Seeking Assurances? was the title of Dr. Dawn Thilmany's presentation. Myriad reasons are given for the significant growth in "locavores," including the desire to reconnect with the food system, produce quality that is perceived to be higher, or support for the local economy, according to Dr. Thilmany. All of these food issues likely matter for some consumer segments. The presentation explored whether local and direct markets are in fact market-based solutions to provide consumers with assurances that their purchases have substantive impacts on concerns that matter to them. To inform marketing and policy makers, Dr. Thilmany examined the types of assurances consumers seek (farmland preservation, support for farms or local economies, more healthful food), the value placed on these assurances and the overall buying behavior of this consumer segment.

Dr. Mike Hamm presented *Growing Kids, Growing Food – Farm to School: Opportunities and Realities*, in which he explored the expansion of farm to school programs across the US. Conceptually, such programs are simple to implement, by developing agreements between local farmers and K-12 food service directors to supply local food products for the school lunch program. However, important questions arise. For example, what are some of the advantages and

costs of such programs across the K-12 educational system? Why do farmers and food service directors wish to engage in such relationships? How does the school lunch budget relate to the price farmers receive? How does the farmer know if they are getting a good price relative to their cost of production? What limits continued development of these programs across the upper Midwest and Northeast? In addition to addressing these questions, Dr. Hamm reviewed strategies being developed in Michigan to help ease program implementation barriers of these programs.

Building Networks That Work: Iowa's Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups was presented by Dr. Richard Pirog. He argued that all too often the organizations that work to support businesses and communities in sustainable food systems collaborate only at superficial levels that do not synergize the expertise and social and financial capital available to make systems change. Value Chain Partnerships (VCP), an Iowa-based network of food and agriculture working groups, uses a more collaborative, decentralized approach in managing knowledge for food systems change. The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University and Practical Farmers of Iowa are core members of this network of over 200 active participants, 50 organizations and 100 businesses. VCPs identify emerging opportunities with high potential to deliver benefits; facilitate cooperation of diverse interests to create cumulative learning, innovation and solutions; create, document and leverage knowledge, and deploy this knowledge as technical assistance, and attract, leverage, and distribute funding to support their mission.

This project currently focuses on niche pork, grass-based livestock, regional foods, small meat processing, and fruit and vegetables. A new group focusing on energy conservation for small farms was recently added.

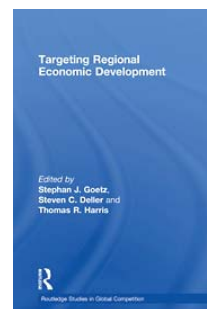
In addition, Drs. Jennifer Wilkins, Kathy Ruhf and Duncan Hilchey served on a discussion panel, and Deputy Commissioner Jerry Cosgrove, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets made a dinner presentation on local food system policy. I am very thankful to our co-sponsors, to the members of the organizing committee – which was chaired by Associate Director Walter Whitmer – for their very hard work in making this an excellent event; to all those making presentations and taking notes; and to each of the attendees, who provided us with many ideas for carrying this work forward. If you were unable to attend the conference but are interested in participating in this discussion, please send us a note.

Slideshows and videos can be viewed at: <http://nercrd.psu.edu/LocalFoods/LFCPresentations.html>

Stephan J. Goetz

PUBLICATION

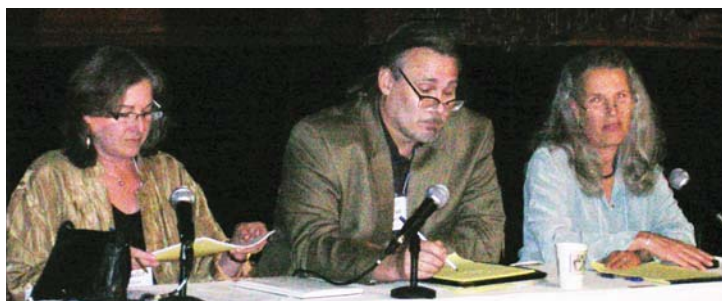
Targeting Regional Economic Development, edited by Stephan J. Goetz, Steven C. Deller, Thomas R. Harris, *Routledge Studies in Global Competition*.



For the first time in a single book, Goetz, Deller and Harris present an innovative approach through a collection of chapters discussing industry targeting and the

relevance of TRED as an important analytical tool for practical targeting purposes.

ISBN: 978-0-415-77591-5 (hardback)
 Publisher: Routledge
 Binding: Hardback, 410 pages
 Publication Date: March 26, 2009
 Price: \$130.00



Drs. Jennifer Wilkins, Duncan Hilchey and Kathy Ruhf served on a discussion panel at the Local Foods Conference

Northeast SARE & Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development 2009 Sustainable Community Grants

CNE09-057

Building a Case for Local Agricultural Infrastructure

Kelly Coleman, Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, South Deerfield, MA

Massachusetts leads the nation in average direct farm sales per farm, and demand for local food continues to grow. A restraint on increased direct sales is a shortage of local processing capacity, especially for dairy, meat, and greens. The project manager will write case-specific rationales on the economic benefits of improved processing capacity, identify the infrastructure needs in the farm community, and develop a guide and tool kit on this topic suitable for wider adoption.
\$24,968 (funded by the NERCRD)

CNE09-058

The Rhode Island "Market Mobile": Easing Channels for Distribution for Farmers and Food Buyers

Sheri Griffin, Farm Fresh Rhode Island, Providence, RI
\$21,777

CNE09-59

Local Officials Training Initiative and Farm Book

Barbara Henderson, Cazenovia Area Community Development Association, Cazenovia, NY
\$6,018

CNE09-060

A Mobile Farmers' Market for Farmers Market Nutrition Program Beneficiaries

Schirlyn Kamara, Threshold Foundation, Lancaster, PA
\$19,498

CNE09-061

Recipes for Success: Empowering Farmers, Leveraging Resources, Building Community

Craig Lapine, Cultivating Community, Portland, ME
\$23,446

CNE09-062

Maine Fiberarts Online Tour Map: Studios and Farms 2009-2012

Christine Macchi, Maine Fiberarts, Topsham, ME
\$24,378

CNE09-063

Mid-Atlantic Small Black Farmers Food Distribution Project

Gladys McMichael, Help Ourselves Project, Philadelphia, PA
\$21,395

CNE09-064

Southern Litchfield County's First Regional, Locally Grown Produce Distribution Facility

Vincent P. Nolan, Jr., Town of New Milford, New Milford, CT
\$11,214

CNE09-065

Marketing the Market: Facilitating EBT Usage Among Farmers' Market Customers

Sara Porth, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT
\$9,792

CNE09-066

Incubation, Expansion, and Learning: The Microloan Fund for New England Farmers

Dorothy Suput, The Carrot Project, 2 Belmont Terrace, Somerville, MA
\$17,514

The Sustainable Community Grant is a joint offering of Northeast SARE and the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development. To learn more about these grants and how to apply, go to www.nesare.org or call 802/656-0471.

Local Food Movement Overview

Jumping on the Next Bandwagon: An Overview of the Policy and Legal Aspects of the Local Food Movement,

by staff attorney Marne Coit, the National Agricultural Law Center, University of Arkansas School of Law, explores what the local food movement is and why there is an increasing consumer-based interest in local food. The movement is not a cohesive one, nor is it one that is organized by a particular group. Rather, it is a grass-roots movement comprised of people who, for a variety of reasons, are interested in obtaining food grown or produced where they live or in producing the food themselves. Federal programs and policies that affect local food systems, current and future regulation of local food, and where this movement may be headed in the future are all explored.



"Jumping on the Next Bandwagon" was also published in the Spring 2008 issue of the Journal of Food Law & Policy.

http://nationalaglawcenter.org/assets/articles/coit_bandwagon.pdf

Courtesy of Charles Abdalla

TRAINING

Foundations of Practice, Community Development Core Competencies for Extension Professionals in All Program Areas, fall 2009 training will be offered Tuesdays, September 29-November 10, 2009 and Wednesdays, September 30-November 11, 2009. Component One is a distance education program. Registration information is available at: <http://srdc.msstate.edu/projects/corecomp/component1.htm>.

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The Northeast Center is one of four regional rural development centers in the nation that focus specifically on rural challenges and opportunities. The Northeast Center provides support to the experiment stations and extension services of sixteen land-grant institutions in twelve northeastern states and the District of Columbia. The Center receives core funds from USDA-CSREES and the Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors. Any opinions expressed in Center publications are strictly those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of funders.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

SARE Funding Opportunities

Northeast SARE and the Northeast Center are partnering to offer Sustainable Community Grants. Sustainable Community Grants make a direct connection between community revitalization and farming. Projects must address specific key issues such as farm finance, marketing, land use, water use, enterprise development, value-added product development, or other delineated topic areas.

To apply, you must be affiliated with Cooperative Extension, NRCS, a municipality, a state department of agriculture, a college or university, a community organization, or other institutional entity. Application deadlines are in December for awards the following March.

2010 proposals are due November 24, 2009.
Information is available at:
<http://mesare.org/get/sustainable-community/>

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

NERCRD Board of Directors

Please join us in welcoming the Honorable Marge Kilkelly, Deputy Director, Eastern Regional Conference/Council of State Governments, and Dr. Tom Brady, Dean and AES Director, University of NH, to the Center's Board of Directors.

STAFF UPDATE

Center Staff Update

We are pleased to welcome Kristi Thompson as Administrative Support Assistant at the Northeast Center. Kristi previously worked as a legal assistant in State College, PA.

Electronic Copy Available

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please send your e-mail address to pkb4@psu.edu

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