

**Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act of 2007
Task Force**

**PRODUCTION COMMITTEE
Notes of Feb. 27, 2008 Meeting**

Present: Dean Craine, Debbie Hillman, Donna Lehrer, Bill Olthoff, Allan Sexton, Tom Spaulding
Absent: Johari Cole

Discussion

Bill asked to clarify goal of legislation.

Debbie: Using Tom Grant's model of a self-sustaining economy, ask for state "jump-starting" support (not permanent subsidies) for any Illinois individual wanting to be part of the food system and having an idea for an economically viable component.

Donna: Specialty growers rely on the market (not government support).

Tom: Citing Kellogg Foundation's "Food and Society", suggested we might want to set goals. E.g., if retail food sales in Illinois are currently only 1-2% Illinois-grown, perhaps our goal would be 3% in X amount of years.

Resources for Research

STATE INITIATIVES: Michigan (foundation and government partnership), Connecticut (Mark Winne, Hartford Food System), New Mexico (Mark Winne), Wisconsin (Homegrown Wisconsin).

Debbie to find additional states that have looked at local food systems from a PRODUCTION level.

INTERNAL RESOURCES. Donna suggested that we each make a list of the groups/individuals we work with to tap for recommendations. Send to Debbie.

MEDIA OUTLETS. Suggested outlets to place notice of "seeking input". It was suggested that we put together a 1-page flyer for wide distribution (farmers markets, electronic newsletters, etc.). Needs to have a clear "ask". Flyer could be used to advertise listening sessions.

Prairie Farmer Magazine
Farm Week (Farm Bureau)
Great lakes Vegetable Growers (Michigan)
Growing for Market (Michigan?)
AgriNews
Specialty Growers newsletter (Farm Bureau)
U. of Ill. Extension: each county newsletter.
Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant send to Midwest Organic Conference list
CRAFT (60 farmers + 50 "friends")
The Land Connection (central Illinois farmers)

Tom to send to Debbie copy of blurb to CRAFT (including 4 questions).

Information Needed

STATISTICS. Describe the existing local food system in Illinois. Information in Red Tomato Report, Sustain's Organic Harvest, county census information.

of farms, farmers, size of farms

roadside stands

farmers markets

crops (including what did Illinois used to grow, non-food agricultural products)

% of agricultural production that is food in Illinois

buying policies (government, Wal-Mart, Whole Foods, Lettuce Entertain You, universities)

Priorities to Building a Healthy Local Food System

1. Problem: Not enough farmers growing food for people
Solution: Train farmers to meet local demand (scale up)
2. Problem: Consumers' ignorance (where food comes from, who grows it, people want food out of season, etc.)
Solution: Education consumers on value of local and organic foods
Labeling (SOOL – State Origin of Label)
3. Problem: Wholesale markets do not exist.
Solution: Get retail groceries to buy local/organic
Invest in infrastructure for out of season crops
4. Problem: Loss of farmland (rezoning pushing out land from urban areas, farmland rent going from \$150/acre in 2006 to \$300/acre in 2008, competition for farmland from conventional grain)

Discussion on Priorities

MARKETS

Donna: Stopped doing farmers markets; income unreliable.

Dean: Need for wholesale pricing.

Tom: Retail/small grocery is where the price point can make a difference.

Dean: Farmers don't like/know how to market their product.

Donna: 20 acres of hydroponic peppers (Illinois) couldn't compete with European peppers; why?

Tom: Perhaps some subsidy along the way. Angelic Organics CSA sells out earlier and earlier each year, training more and more farmers. 50 acres, self-supporting (5 full-time employees, 15 part-time, delivers June-December to drop-off sites.

Allan: Educate people and demand will solve everything.

LABELS

Donna: Labels already exist in Specialty Crop Growers (not consistently used).

LAND

Donna: Definition of agricultural land. In Kane County, more than 5 acres. Residential land is taxed 4 times agricultural land. Some owners who want to keep agricultural zoning are renting to vegetable farmers.

EQUIPMENT

Dean: Equipment sharing.

Donna: People don't take care of borrowed equipment.

Tom: At Prairie Crossing, incubator farms share equipment (leased from Prairie Crossing).

There's currently lots of old equipment for sale from older farmers.