

IL Local and Organic, Food and Farm Task Force  
2/27/08

Wes Jarrell called meeting to order at 10:05

Members present:

Wes Jarrell  
Jim Braun  
Dean Craine  
Allan Sexton  
Donna Lehrer  
Tom Grant  
Chuck Paprocki  
Leslie Duram  
Delayne Reeves  
Jim Slama  
Vicky Ranney  
Bill Olthoff  
Keith Bolin  
Warren King  
Carrie Edgar  
Greg Christian  
Debbie Hillman  
Tom Spaulding  
Bridget Holcomb  
Penny Roth  
Chris Eckert  
Stan Schutte  
John Vanek  
Gerry Kettler

Members joining by phone

June Tanoue  
Chris Denes for Mary Ellen Caron  
Erika Allen

Members introduced themselves

Wes began the meeting by reminding members that the report is due on September 1.

Wes called for a review of the agenda and asked for suggestions of topics to discuss.

Suggestions:

- Reaching out to and building a larger coalition
- Creating a brochure

- Expert advice from an agricultural lawyer or FSA office, i.e. for pulling acres out of base payments
- Organizing listening sessions
- Task Force needs that could be fulfilled by interns
- Outline for final product
- Discuss local vs. organic
- Creating a listserv for members
- Representing the Task Force to the media

Director Hartke welcomed the group to the Fairgrounds and offered his best wishes and success for the large task we have in front of us.

Larger Coalition:

Committees are not closed; they are open to anyone in larger community, or people from other task force committees. Committees can also bring in experts as they see fit.

Committee heads, in consultation with larger task force, will say whether someone can join a committee. We need to manage level of participation so committees continue to move, but balance that with an open communication and a transparent process. Also, it was requested that the website be set up so that people can send information directly to a committee.

In addition, this Task Force falls under the open meeting act, and everyone is welcome to come to the meetings.

Representing the Task Force to the media:

After discussion, Vicky moved to make Wes is official media contact for statements, but with the understanding that all can and should speak as individual members

Tom Spaulding seconded

Motion carried

It was emphasized that we need to not stifle people talking to the media, especially for people who have been involved in getting us here. However, we need to differentiate between representing the task force and representing oneself as a member of the task force.

It was also brought up that the Task Force needs a media plan to outline what media we want to present at each stage. The media committee will draft press releases and then work with the Chair and the Dept of Ag to finalize. The Dept of Ag, individuals and groups are welcome to send out finalized press releases. A press release should go out soon that includes a calendar for all meetings and listening sessions.

Members volunteered to work on a media plan:

Jim Slama

Jim Braun

Donna Lehrer

Jerry Bradley was suggested, although not present and needs to be asked

Debbie Hillman  
Keith Bolin

### Questions for Rep. Julie Hamos

Rep. Julie Hamos was able to join the Task Force meeting for a short time, to offer her congratulations and her thanks. She also passed along Sen. Jackie Collins' regards, who could not come to the meeting today because of a conflicting committee meeting. Julie then highlighted how this is an opportunity to get the legislature to think about these issues and she is looking forward to exciting, new, creative policies, that come out of this process, albeit a lot is expected of us in a short timeline.

Wes offered his thanks for the Task Force for Rep. Hamos' work and opened the floor to questions.

*What is it going to take to succeed?*

Make a convincing report through policy recommendations that make a case for it, including a larger vision, and build a statewide coalition including players that have the ear of legislators. Make sure that the Dept of Ag is onboard.

*What should the main message be, since there are many issues involved?*

We're not far enough along to know if there are trade-offs, but right now it feels like all issues addressed are completely compatible. Don't see it as an either/or.

*Short-term vs long-term?*

Completely compatible to look at short term and long term recommendations, and one of the recommendations could be the continuation of this task force.

*What is the perception of this in the state legislature?*

During this process, some people at the table now spent a lot of time teaching legislators about this bill. The debate on the house floor created more interest. It has also received some nice press. Don't want to jump the gun and pursue legislators now since we don't have solid ideas yet. Right now, leave the legislature out of it, build the base, and respect your own process.

*What is the next step?*

First focus on the report, then create forum to build base of support in the legislature. We can then create a new bill if that is what we decide to do. We could decide we want a simple appropriations request, which could or could not be a bill.

*Will the legislature be interested in case studies in other states?*

Absolutely.

### Task Force needs that could be fulfilled by interns:

We have had several people volunteer to be interns, and there are possibilities for looking for support for these internships. Internships could be focused on the needs of the committees as well as needs for the entire Task Force, such as looking at case studies and outcomes from other states. Intern descriptions should be sent to chair.

Leslie Duram could oversee interns as part of her program, but they would need to have a focus on education and have a clear description of the expectations, timeline, and

outcome. Just to give an idea, currently Leslie's full-time grad students earn \$2300 for a semester internship.

### *Local vs. Organic*

Points discussed on this topic included:

- We shouldn't think about our issues in these terms, since we don't have enough time to thoroughly address this issue, and we can assume that these are supporting ideas.
- This is a divisive issue, and we should not communicate this as an organic initiative but keep it local and focus on economic development, job creation and rural revitalization.
- We need to look 10 years down the road or look at our overall vision of what we want our food system to look like. For instance, a picture that is green, healthy, and affordable.
- Chris Eckert stated that he, as a producer, would like support for looking into organic production.
- The bill creating this Task Force points to both local and organic foods, but the bill separates local foods and organic foods.
- Organics are successful because they are a niche market. We need to work together with organic producers and corporate producers, since what we refer to as corporate producers are family farms.
- We need to be careful about assigning value judgments to food, and need to not say that organic production is better than another type of production. We need all farmers, and we need to not alienate any farmers.
- We as a Task Force need a mission statement, and members need to be vigilant that we clarify at every opportunity that it is not just about organics, and when talking about this local should be first.

### Task Force Meeting Scheduling:

Wes proposes meeting the first Wednesday of every month, keeping in mind that we may need more meetings toward the deadline. Next meeting April 2.

Warren moves that all the task force meetings be held in Springfield.

Seconded by Carrie

Motion carries

Delayne then secured the auditorium in the Dept of Ag for the future meeting dates:

April 2

May 7

June 4

July 2

August 6

September 3

### Listening Sessions:

There was discussion about moving the Task Force meetings around the state to piggyback them on listening sessions, but for a variety of reasons it was decided that the

Task Force meetings would be best held in Springfield separate from the listening sessions, and that members are encouraged to attend as many listening sessions as possible. We will also have reports back to the Task Force on the listening sessions.

Warren moves that there be six listening sessions in the following cities: St Louis, Chicago, Carbondale, Champaign, Rockford, and the Quad Cities, and that these listening sessions be completed by July 15<sup>th</sup>.

Chris Eckert seconds

Motion carries

#### Creating a listserv for members

It was decided to set up a listserv for Task Force members. Members should look for invitation to join listserv soon.

Also, contact information and bios of all the task force members will be shared.

#### Staffing the Task Force:

We provided an update that Fresh Taste Initiative was open to receiving a proposal for funding work for the task force.

Tom Spaulding moved that Debbie and Jim Braun be accepted as official task force staff members under the following description:

### **Local and Organic Food Task Force**

#### **Job Description**

#### **Position: Task Force Staff Coordinator (1 FTE)**

Supervision: Task Force Staff Coordinators report to the Chair of the Task Force

Summary: The task force staff coordinators provide the primary staff support for the work of the task force, including coordination with the Chair and Secretary, committee support, research, outreach, and documentation.

Responsibilities:

1. Provide staff support to the Chair and Secretary of the Task Force.
2. Provide staff support to the committees of the Task (staff will be assigned to each committee).
3. Draft and revise documents for committees and Task Force as a whole.
4. Conduct research or supervise research needed as directed by the Chair, Secretary and committees.
5. Coordinate conference calls.
6. Staff the listening sessions held throughout the state, document results and report back to the Task Force.

7. Serve as media and outreach contacts for the Chair as needed.

Initial committee assignments:

Production – Debbie

Infrastructure – Jim

Media – Debbie

Funding – Jim

Consumer Access – Jim

Economic Analysis – Jim

Education – Debbie

Tom Grant moves to accept job description

Vicky seconds

Motion carries

We adjourned the meeting to committee breakouts.

Report back from the committees: The following are notes taken during report backs. For full notes on committee breakouts go to the information on that committee on the website: [http://www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/Mkt\\_ILOFFTaskForce.html](http://www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/Mkt_ILOFFTaskForce.html)

Production:

- Generated lists of assets, problems and solutions
- Not enough farmers growing food for people – training more farmers to meet demand
- Consumer ignorance, not enough consumers demanding local and organic – investing in infrastructure for season extension, educate educate educate, labels of origin
- Wholesale markets aren't there
- Farmland and rezoning
- Boom in prices for grain creating competition for farmland
- Further staffing issues: need a snapshot of local food system pulling together a profile of where we are now
- National initiatives. Do we need a similar goal, i.e. 10% local
- Research other state initiatives
- Join with the media committee, outreach, how to reach farmers to join the listening sessions
- Mission statement dreaming for a local food system: generates & circulates dollars, food that tastes good, food that is healthy, food that is accessible, fair, green

Infrastructure:

- Process that we will use to write the report, hope to use similar methodology as other groups.
- Want to look at infrastructure based on category of food and fiber

- Intern needs: understanding where we are today, looking at food imports, current data
- Asset mapping relative to each food category
- Understand regulatory regime – intern help?
- Is local food going to waste?
- Timeline for this portion of the report: starting writing in early June, get it to larger Task Force by August

#### Consumer Access:

- Asking: what are the assets, problems, costs, obstacles
- What are the existing policy and policy changes for getting local foods into schools and other institutions – have done some research into Food to School projects
- Food deserts and areas of poverty – food stamps, WIC programs, put together information on food banks and soup kitchens across the state
- Food literacy – while there are programs about nutrition, very little information about local food – will develop a consumer survey to be coordinated with the education committee
- Existing retail and wholesale markets in Southern IL, have developed some data on that including direct marketing and institutions
- Local food to local retail and wholesale markets – efforts to educate farmers in post-harvest handling
- Market viability – what Niemann Foods, for example, look for when assessing when and where to put in a grocery store
- Continuing to look at assets, obstacles, problems, solutions
- Labeling – State of Origin Labeling

#### Education:

- Identifying what is currently happening around the state to put together a comprehensive list.
- Farmer education, consumer education
- Funding opportunities: looking at building onto and expanding currently successful programs such as Farm Beginnings, and look at projects in other states
- Same thing for consumers

#### Economic Analysis:

- Need to find out what the baseline is
- Then we need to decide, where to
- Need to find out how many times a dollar turns over in the community
- Economic analysis of scale – farmers in the middle, “moderate volume, good margin”
- Looking at economic models
- What if we were looking at providing twice as much local foods, what would that mean in economic terms

Other comments:

- Food safety needs to be looked at, perhaps by production and infrastructure committees
- How do we make sure we are not overlapping with each group? Each committee should get an outline to Bridget to put together a larger outline to be prepared for next meeting

Leslie thanked Gerry Kettler for providing lunch and snacks

Wes asked for changes to the minutes

Tom Grant moved to accept minutes

Chuck seconds

Motion carries

Wes adjourned meeting at 3 p.m.