Regional Roundtable: Building Resilient Food Systems

Triangle J Council of Governments
July 24, 2020

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Community Food Strategies
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
Food Supply During Covid-19: Innovative Ideas for Local Governments

This is a free 45-minute On-Demand Webinar. If you would like access to the on-demand webinar, please register HERE. If you have any questions, please contact fulton@sog.unc.edu.

Local governments are being tested by stay-at-home measures, the economic downturn, and new health and safety requirements. Collaborative leadership encourages and enables the kinds of interactive planning and resource sharing needed to feed vulnerable populations and support our agricultural partners during COVID-19.

May 27
School Nutrition Programs

June 3
Community Gardens and Farms

June 10
Leveraging Underutilized Infrastructure to Improve Food Access & Supply

June 17
Food Business Innovation in the Time of COVID-19

What are food systems?
The diagram illustrates the various components of the food system, including production, processing, distribution, and consumption. The diagram highlights the interconnectivity of these components and the importance of considering the full lifecycle of food from production to consumption.

Diagram produced by Julia Pon of Wholesome Wave for the CT Farmlands Food and Jobs Working Group, January 2012.

https://medium.com/@sarah_k_mock/the-problem-with-the-food-system-is-it-works-39604d56a84f
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/apr/24/real-cost-of-roast-chicken-animal-welfare-farms
A resilient food system is able to withstand and recover from disruptions in a way that ensures a sufficient supply of acceptable and accessible food for all.

- John Hopkins Food Policy Networks Food System Resilience Project
Together Let’s Build a Better Food System!

https://foodtank.com/
MIDWAY PLANTATION SLAVE CEMETERY

A short distance east of this marker is the site of the Midway Plantation slave cemetery which holds the remains of many of the African Americans who labored on the 1,000 acre plantation in the bonds of slavery during the mid-nineteenth century. By 1850 some 38 slaves toiled on the plantation and through their efforts Lysander McGavock's Midway thrived and boasted of 600 acres of improved farmland and produced cash crops of corn and tobacco.
“Agriculture is no longer a way of life. It’s a business.”
— Nixon’s Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz

https://www.laprogressive.com/good-food-movement/

“Get big or get out”

Created direct payment subsidies in the 1970’s

https://www.quotationof.com/earl-butz.html
Pigford v Glickman

- Class action lawsuit
- 400 farmers
- Systemic discrimination by USDA
  - Periods of 1983-1997
  - PIGFORD vs GLICKMAN, 1998
  - 2008, $100 million settlement
  - Additional $1.25 billion in 2010 (Pigford II)
Three Decades of Consolidation in U.S. Agriculture

James M. MacDonald, Robert A. Hoppe, and Doris Newton
• Statewide process to develop recommendations to build NC’s sustainable local food economy.

• Recommendation 1: Engage decision makers in strategic food systems planning and implementation
  – Establish statewide food policy council
  – Support local food policy council development
Food Councils build connections to improve:

- health
- food equity and access
- natural resource protection
- economic development around food
- emergency response around food
- and production agriculture

.....for **ALL** of its community’s residents and workers.

Food Councils solve broad food system issues by giving communities more control over the ways they produce, consume and dispose of food.
Who’s involved?

All Intersecting With Food

- Farmers
- Health Professionals
- Public Schools
- Local Governments
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Restaurants and Food Retailers
- Faith Communities
- Food Security Organizations
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What do food councils do?

- **Assess** the current food system
- **Connect** stakeholders to align efforts
- **Educate** leaders and the community
- **Recommend** policy and program changes
Community Food Strategies is a team of food system experts with members based at these seven organizations and initiatives. The team supports a network of 36 independent community-based food councils across North Carolina by working to inspire connections and amplify collective action so that community voices are heard and food policy shifts toward more equitable outcomes. The initiative works collaboratively to help build an equitable, community driven food system that improves the quality of life for all people.

**Abbey Piner – Center for Environmental Farming Systems**

**Amy Marion – Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project**

**Gini Knight – Center for Environmental Farming Systems**

**Brandy Bynum Dawson – NC Rural Center**

**Jared Cates – Carolina Farm Stewardship Association**

**LaShauna Austria – Kindred Seedlings Farm**

**Lindsey Carver – Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC**

**Megan Bolejack – Care Share Health Alliance**

**Shorlette Ammons – Committee on Racial Equity at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems**
What we do:

• Champion & support food councils and community work
• Bring people together
• Build alliances
• Ask the questions
• Provide tools and trainings
• Offer network structure
Tools for Food System Resilience
EMBEDDING A RACIAL EQUITY PRACTICE
In December 2017, we introduced an intention to embed a racial equity practice across Community Food Strategies’ work.

WHAT WE DID:

**Evaluation Measures**
All event evaluations included asked attendee’s perception of inclusion at the event.

**Micro-grants: 13 food councils awarded**
A focus on RE was a key priority for funding. Those awarded were required to attend a RE training.
- One FC hired an RE coach.
- Another hosted listening sessions to re-frame their coalition grounded in a RE approach.

**Level 1 & 2 Racial Equity Trainings**
Three Level 1 trainings, attended by 95 ppl, 17 FCs.
- One Level 2 workshop to further one FCs ability to use RE language and tools specific to their work.

**In-between Webinars**
51 attendees across 15 food councils learned this method for building a community of practice around racial equity, their work.

**Equitable Food System Video & Discussion**
We shared this video at all regional gatherings and facilitated group conversations about equity and shared goals.

**Equity Assessment**
All team members completed two equity assessments for our project which influenced our 2019 strategic planning.
A Network and Systems Approach

- Multiple agencies
- Multi-stakeholder environments
- Adaptive leadership
- Innovation and learning
- Experiment
Collective Impact

BEFORE

AFTER
Results-Based Accountability: “Turning the Curve”

It takes a variety of strategies to turn the curve—beyond the delivery of services (low-cost citizen action, media support, public policy, etc.)
Vision of the Network of NC Food Councils

To build a resilient and equitable food and farming system across all counties in North Carolina.
Shared Goals of the Network

- Community Engagement
- Partnerships
- Economic Opportunity
- Food Access
- Policy
- Equity
- Education
Location: Halifax County

Themes during the COVID-19 pandemic:

**Network Value**: youth engagement

**Action**: Providing community meals and food boxes, civic engagement, collaboration with restaurants, culture building around healthy food and lifestyles

Youth have continued existing civic engagement projects, first with census counts and then with voter registration. They have also developed fliers and social media posts to encourage COVID-19 safety measures including social distancing and wearing masks.

The ABC2 project has also partnered with a local restaurant, Hen and the Hog and a local caterer to make meals for families in need on Saturdays, when school meals are not available. They are serving about 400 meals/weekend to families and seniors across the county - free of charge and no forms required. The project has been funded in part by the County Commissioners of Halifax County.

ABC2 has also partnered with CFSA and their FarmsSHARE program to provide 25 free boxes of locally produced produce and meat a week for 8 weeks.
Location: New Hanover County

Themes during the COVID-19 pandemic:
- **Network Value**: Power of existing relationships, existing credibility
- **Action**: Organizing & coordination, food distribution and relief efforts, information distribution, local farm/food promotion

The Cape Fear Food Council immediately began hosting weekly calls with local government to collect resources for food assistance guides and ongoing needs for New Hanover, Pender, and Brunswick Counties.

They launched online resources maps in each county that are continually updated from the weekly calls.

They have also hosted calls to coordinate food delivery to populations that need food like seniors and kids.

They initiated a texting campaign to better reach populations that may not have internet access or other ways of accessing information.

FEAST Down East (a council member) partnered with CFSA on their FarmSHARE program and distributed 800 boxes of locally produced produce and meat to out of work restaurant and hospitality workers.
Themes during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Network Value:** Noticed/acknowledged for cross-sector organizing & relationships
- **Action:** Coordination, community/home gardens, food distribution

Davidson County Local Food Network was invited to join a call for coordinating a COVID-19 response to the community. They were recognized for their organizing and existing relationships across sectors, and asked to be the hub for local food & resources guide.

Created google maps for food pantries and free meals as well as local farms.

In partnership with Cooperative Extension and the health department they distributed home garden kits and created an online education series for beginning gardeners.

Working with the city of Lexington to provide resources, like topsoil, for community gardens.
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