
Farm-to- Market Roundtable

Hosted by Edible Austin

March 8, 2010

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
What Participants Wanted From This Meeting	4
Assessing Market Forces: Trends, What's Working Well, What's Not Working Well	6
Best Practices: What Success Looks Like for Farmer/Producers and End-Sellers	8
Towards New Solutions	
Enhancing Communications	10
Strengthening Education	11
Exploring Co-op Models	12
Appendices	
Meeting Agenda	14
Participants	15
Meeting Evaluation	16

Executive Summary

A Farm-to-Market Roundtable, hosted by *Edible Austin*, was held on March 8, 2010 at Barr Mansion in Austin, Texas. Representatives from a cross-section of local farmers, producers, restaurants, institutions and grocers were invited to participate. The purpose of the meeting was to begin a dialog on models that:

- expand the supply of local, sustainably raised and produced food
- support the financial needs of farmers
- drive the pricing, consistency and volume requirements of end-sellers
- deliver affordability for consumers

While much work remains to be done, the participants generally agreed that on-going opportunities to build relationships, understand the market-place and potentially share infrastructure resources are vital drivers to building a stronger local food economy. Three strategic imperatives – enhancing communications, strengthening education, and exploring co-op models – were identified and further developed.

What Participants Wanted From This Meeting

Build Relationships:

- Know the farmers better
- Meet and greet Austin's local food players
- Open relationship between other farmers and restaurants
- Better relations and understanding between farmers and end sellers
- Connecting further with community of growers/end sellers with clear understanding of needs
- Networking with farmers/producers – create one-to-one relationships
- Better built connections between our rural producers and end users
- Organizing farmers to connect with end sellers even if all individual concerns: a conduit
- Better collaboration between growers, sellers and retailers
- I'd like to develop a better understanding between farmers and end sellers as to what is local and to see local sellers purchasing more from local farms

Understand the market:

- Describe the market future in Texas
- Understand buyers parameters (guidelines)
- Rough estimate of demand in the end users based on seasons
- More knowledge about the end users cost concerns
- More discussion on supplying local food to local community

Support for producers:

- Stronger support for organic producers
- Better understanding of the needs of my producers
- Ideas for helping our farm meet the demand for our product
- An increased availability of locally produced produce, meals and flowers/plants
- Promote organic production
- Understanding of farmers needs for institutional and other direct sales that SFC can help address

Understand the infrastructure:

- A better grasp of how the alternative food infrastructure is developing in Central Texas
- To learn how to buy local food more efficiently, with fewer phone calls, etc.
- Better understanding of sales and marketing channels for local foods
- Ideas of how to support a cohesive regional food system
- Identify and recognize the challenges in our local food production, distribution and retail environment
- Distribution of my product at a lower cost

Plan of action:

- Direction or plan for more sustainability and profitability for this idea
- Action plan for next steps

World Peace:

- Full belly and peace!

Assessing Market Forces

Trends That Will Impact the Market	What's Working Well	What Is Not Working Well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Inc. – awareness of factory farming/large food industry • Organics • Large farms that capitalize on “organics” • Public awareness of local/organic foods • Awareness creates demand for farming • Growing practices • Overhead or traditional prices rising, leveling the market for local • Regulations increasing • Spectators – not buyers perception of overpriced destination not food • Growth of CSA • People want to “experience” farm – farm days • Local food movement • Educating (?) movies • Legislation – leafy greens, raw milk • Growing popularity of local food • Small farms starting up • Restaurants/institutions looking for local foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Local” marketing tool • Awareness creates demand • Increased awareness in general public in restaurants, grocery, markets • Personal relationships with producers @ market • Farmers markets growth • Local distribution system (network) • CSA’s • AFM – downtown • Farms that send out eblast with regular availability – need quantities • Increase of local growers • Greater variety of outlets – new niches • End users willing to change roles to incorporate local • More diversity of producers • Support systems (SFC, EA, local harvest (??) slow food) • Sustainable Food Center Farm Direct program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Local” marketing tool • Conference on definition of “organic” • Producers who resell • Definition of “local” • Honesty of sources • No regulations of non-certified organic • Consistency of product • Retailers willing to carry non-local items that are available locally • Integrity @ f.m. (farmers markets?) • Peddlers • Confusion of certification – watering down or confusing language of practices • Demand too much production & fulfillment • Bridge between purchaser and farmer is broken • Appropriate support for farmers technical, knowledge • Need better understanding of restaurant biz and their needs • Food safety – UT & hospitals • Lack of accountability – local, organic, basic standards • How to get individual farmers

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scattered small markets• More middle man entering the picture• Need more web presence for availabilities• Gap between producers and end users		<p>together – no distribution system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Misconception of how big you have to be (misinformation about supply/demand)• Delivery• Restaurants misrepresenting “local” – greenwashing• Education consumers about seasonality – mainstream media, bloggers, newsletters• Coordinating farmers with market needs• Potential problem: lack of land/resources to support local agriculture growth• Too much transportation to deliver products
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Best Practices: What Success Looks Like for Farmers/Producers and End-Sellers

Define high level goals for your group

Farmers/Producers	End-Sellers
Animal processing – lack of processing facilities scaled to small producers. Regulations apply to large & small alike	Serve as much locally produced products as possible – abundant resources
"Veggie" produce growers – regulations apply to large & small alike	Understood/agreed upon quality standards
Produce best quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional systems – local food safety system for small producers • Rural opportunities – employees/feeding communities 	What is local/organic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local vs. regional • "Best closest"
To have an educated public on eating seasonally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize & unite as growers (grow apt) • Start with youth programs • Identify ourselves clearly • Define "local" 	Consumer education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find windows of opportunity in our area to grow seasonally
Connect regularly as producers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through grow apt • emails 	Producer education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractual agreements • Producer re-assurance • Forum for end-user/producers to communicate
Sell everything we grow and make a living	Open communication & understanding at producer level
Define integrity – local closing the gap creating bigger share to local growers	
Create affordable food for lower income families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through national & local legislative policy 	

Define the criteria for achieving those goals

Farmers/Producers	End-Sellers
Feeding 1000 people -> this would produce a living for the grower; strive for 10% local food in the city Making a living – sustaining a high quality of life	Venue for communication/planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry communication/publications
Group together for purchasing, etc. – Co-op? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group facilities – economic opportunity • Find the future in the past • Regenerate small communities 	Agreed upon standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality • Definitions (local/org) • Production claims
Small farms employ more often!	
Local food IS Homeland Security!	
Selling it all & locally	More available products/resources
Receiving a sustainable price for goods sold	
Affordable inputs	
Farms & production more integrated with larger community	

Key discussion points:

- ***We need to determine the size of the market – assessment and crop meetings***
- ***We need equitable availability***

Towards New Solutions: Proposals for Growing the Local Food Economy

Enhancing Communication

Producers → Producers

Producers ↔ Sellers

Farm's Reach

- System in place
- Institutional now
- % driven
- Sustainable Food Center to run

Yahoo Group

- 1 email goes to all
- Can reply privately
- Good for general communication and "situations"

Organizations like Growact, TOFGA, SFC, EA

Quarterly Planning Meeting

- Chefs, producers, sellers
- Plan supply-demand interfact
- "Speed dating" style process to facilitate producer/end-seller connections

Recommended Next Steps:

- 1. Matt & Marla to start Yahoo group***
- 2. Quarterly meetings to be scheduled with expanded audience of buyers/sellers***
- 3. Annual buyer/seller "fair" planned for end of year (co-hosted by EA and Hyatt***

Strengthening Education

- Get people to buy local
 - Single campaign
 - Getting more consumer \$\$
- Look at regional Buy Local campaigns
 - Quarterly/seasonal recertification
- Teaching consumer that not everything is always in season
- Make veggies interesting & compelling to sell
- Wait staff education
- Chef education/youth
- Home gardens
- Who are we not reaching?
- TV, radio, newspaper
- Concentrated marketing effort – sponsored ads
- Get Chamber of Commerce involved
- Need someone to speak for farmers
- Recruit & educate other farmers
- Bigger effort by grocery stores/end sellers to support local growers
- Mass mailing or email with info
- Delivery to restaurants

Recommended Next Steps:

- 1. EA to work with SFC on Buy Local campaign***

Exploring Co-op Models

What do we need?	
Meat/dairy producer	Farmers/Veg
Processing	Sourcing
Distribution	Availability
Warehousing	Warehouse/distribution
Storage	Purchasing power
	Storage
How to make it happen?	
Organize	Organize
Realize common needs -processing -packaging -distribution	Realize common needs -seeds -storage
Why? Need to define compelling case	

Recommended Next Steps:

- 1. Bring in experienced experts to educate us***

APPENDICES

Farm-to-Market Roundtable

March 8, 2010

Roundtable Purpose: Through dialog with farmers, producers and end-sellers, explore models for making local sustainably raised and produced food more widely available at price points that meet the financial needs of farmers and producers, while satisfying end-seller requirements for affordability, consistency and volume.

Meeting Desired Outcomes:

- Describe current and future market scope: businesses that buy/desire local sustainable products
- Assess strengths and weaknesses of current practices for supplying end-sellers
- Define best practices and success criteria for buying and selling
- Develop proposals for strengthening existing models and/or creating new models for successfully growing the local food economy

Proposed Agenda:

10:00 – 10:20	Meeting orientation	Introductions Agenda, outcomes & ground rules review
10:20 – 10:45	Scoping the market & assessing our current practices	Large group discussion & brainstorm
10:45 – 11:30	Best practices: what success looks like for farmers, producers and end-sellers	Stakeholder-focused break-out groups and large group debrief
11:30 – 11:45	Overview of Organic Valley Co-op	Calvin Daily
11:45 – 12:30 (with working lunch)	Towards new solutions: proposals for growing the local food economy	Topic-focused break-out groups
12:30 – 1:30	Reporting out on proposals	Large group debrief
1:30 – 2:00	Meeting wrap-up	Next steps

Participants:

Farmers/Producers:	End Sellers:	Special Guests:
Carol Ann Sayle, Boggy Creek Farm	Parker White, Cipolina	Calvin Daily, Organic Valley Co-op
Jim Richardson, Richardson's Farms	Javier Ortiz, Hyatt	Suzanne Santos, SFC
Pati Jacobs, Bastrop Cattle Company	Chris Romano, Whole Foods	Elizabeth Winslow, Edible Austin
Matt O'Hayre, Vital Farms	Melanie McAfee, Barr Mansion	Marla Camp, Edible Austin
Loncito Cartwright, Loncinto's Lamb	Robert Mayberry, UT	Pat Abrams, Facilitator
Terry Levan, Dewberry Farms	Stephanie Scherzer, Farmhouse Delivery	Andrew Smiley, SFC
Marisol Valle, Hands of the Earth Farm/Urban Roots	Johnny Livesay, Wheatsville Co-op	Sue Beckwith, TOFGA
Skip Connett, Green Gate Farm	Mason Arnold, Greenling	David Clements, Fredericksburg Farmers Market
David Pitre, Tecolote Farm		Jenna Noel, Edible Austin
John Engel, Engel Farm		
Brad Stufflebeam, Home Sweet Farm		
Jo Dwyer, Angel Valley Farm		
Loncito Cartwright, Loncito's Lamb		
Melody McClary, Montesino Farm		
Michael Steele, Steele Farms		

Meeting Evaluation:

Worked Well	Suggested Improvements for Next Meeting
Food Ideas are in the room Professional facilitation works Break-out group sizes No one got hurt Location Documentation Great mix of people	Have participants pay for food Not enough time – need narrower focus for 4 hours Add other perspectives, e.g., public health, government/county extension agents, consumers, end users

