

February 2013 Working Group and State Updates

Coalition Building Working Group Update

This working group has been working to develop a proposal for a Steering Committee that would be an interface between stakeholders and the AFP management team. This would provide a mechanism for joint decision making about key participatory project activities, such as the community food security assessments. The group is finalizing the process for steering committee member election or appointment. Stay tuned for more in the next couple of weeks.

Community, Local, and Regional Food Systems CoP

We continue to work closely with our colleagues in the Community, Local, and Regional Food Systems CoP. The public face to the CoP is still under development; however, the group has made strides in formalizing the structure and format for content creation and curation. A formal invite to join the CoP will be coming soon so stay tuned. In the meantime, an effort to engage more broadly includes establishing a webinar series that will enable CoP members to provide online trainings and outreach messaging about community food systems. Nikki D'Adamo-Damery and Kim Niewolny will be co-leading a webinar about the AFP on February 27th. This will be part of a webinar that includes another AFRI team so that we can learn more about our national and local efforts to enhance food systems food security. A formal notice of this webinar will be coming soon.

Curriculum

At Virginia Tech, a new graduate course titled "Advanced Concepts in Community Food Systems" has been offered for spring 2013. Seven graduate students are participating and eager to learn more about the AFP as an illustration of a regional effort working to enhance community food security in rural Appalachia. As part of this course, students have indicated interest to work with AFP stakeholders to help with project work. As identified by the Virginia coalition group in January, students were welcomed to contact Virginia AFP members to potentially conduct "food system practitioner" interviews. The final product of these interviews may be used to help inform the AFP public, and each other, of the good work AFP stakeholders are producing-- on the ground. Kim Niewolny is the instructor of the course and will be working with Nikki D'Adamo-Damery and Virginia Coalition members to ensure efforts are beneficial for the AFP community.

Communications:

Sarah Misyak and Margaret Smith worked to establish a Facebook page for the AFP. The site will have regular postings that briefly highlight project partners, and will also be a place to post announcements about upcoming events, pictures, and resources. Nikki D'Adamo-Damery is working with Kim Niewolny to coordinate project partner interviews in Virginia, as a way to highlight work in the region. Nikki will also conduct interviews with West Virginia and North Carolina partners for publication on the website.

Modeling

Members of the modeling committee have reflected on and affirmed the decision to include larger scale food supplies in our model of local and regional food systems. This is necessary because many of the assumptions regarding the benefits and value of local food systems involve perceptions, assumptions, and interactions with the "external" food supply. Currently we have focused on natural and built capital and relationships between components within and near these areas. As a group, we are evaluating the concepts we have mapped to ensure they reflect the concerns and desires expressed in our two previous conferences, and those of the literature concerning local food systems. Although aspects the other community capitals have been included, we will begin expanding the breadth and depth of

inclusion in the coming weeks. The modeling efforts to date are raising some very interesting questions.

Some key concerns for the future include: 1) the process for developing indicators and indices relevant to the Whole Measures evaluation (i.e. Justice and Fairness, Strong Communities, Vibrant Farms, Healthy People, Thriving Local Economies, and Sustainable Ecosystems); and 2) developing logical and credible causal pathways that relate intended and desired outcomes of an enhanced local food system with actions, people, and system components. For example, how will an enhanced local food system contribute to an enhanced local "Healthy People" index, when the global food system, with adequate availability of in- and out-of season availability of fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, does not? While we can document these questions and develop initial pathways, we recognize and affirm the need for creativity, feedback, and verification by collaborators will be essential.

Community Food Security Assessment (CFSA)

The CFSA Working Group (WG) is close to finalizing a 'white paper' for distribution to stakeholders that clarifies the purpose of the assessment, as well as to inform and engage stakeholders in the assessment process. The white paper will describe the impacts CFSA can have on a community's food system and also explain how folks can get more involved in CFSA. Other on-going activities include collecting data around the natural, built, financial capital with specific focus on information that stakeholders requested at state meetings. We have also solicited input from stakeholders about meaningful ways to present/share the CFSA results to the AFP community. We plan on posting the white paper on the AFP website very soon.

West Virginia

1. The West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition (WVFFC) brought together producers, organizations, and government officials for the [Road Map for the Food Economy Working Conference](#) on January 29, 2013. This day-long event highlighted the successes of working groups over the last year, and laid the framework for future food systems work in West Virginia. Each working group completed a project in the last year, and shared their learning, along with policy implications and next steps with conference attendees. Nikki D'Adamo-Damery and Karen Day (Plenty!, Virginia) attended from the AFP to learn more about the ongoing work in West Virginia.

2. Two members of the AFP management team along with 2 staff from the WVFFC attended the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG) "It Takes a Region" conference in Saratoga Springs New York (February 10-12) with scholarships from AFP. The conference brought together practitioners, academics, producers, policy-makers, organizers, and other food system stakeholders from across the northeast region to share and plan advocacy and action around key focal areas such as food safety, labor rights, immigration reform, food supply chain development, food processing, hunger and nutrition, data and research, and food system planning. The WV attendees learned about the organizational structure and function of this now 20 year old northeast coalition, and all the successes and challenges that it has experienced in facilitating a network and action across a region. Attendees are excited to share this insight, new contacts, and knowledge about successful models through the WVFFC working groups and AFP network. For more information, please contact Cheryl.Brown@mail.wvu.edu.

North Carolina

Angel Cruz will be attending the Organic Growers School in Western NC in early March. The main goals of her attendance are to:

- physically reconnect with NC state action group leaders,
- gain a general understanding of new activities related to local foods and food security in Western NC, and
- find ways that the AFP can connect to the work happening on the ground.

Virginia

Partners from southwest Virginia gathered on January 23 at Attimo Winery in Christiansburg, Virginia. The purpose of the gathering was to update the group on the AFP, report out on Action Group progress, discuss next steps, and learn more about what's going on in the region. Project partners shared their ongoing work (including data gathering efforts related to production and markets) and discussed ways to work together to maximize efforts and minimize overlap.

AFP action groups also gave brief updates:

- Access: has gathered together a list of curriculums and resources and are looking for gaps. They may try to have students interview stakeholders about the work they are doing.
- Policy: need to figure out how to get VA Farm to Table plan into the hands of policy makers and the public. Need to identify policy targets for the region.
- Agriculture Infrastructure: group has not coalesced, but individuals are doing work to develop infrastructure in the region.

The group requested another meeting in two months, and an opportunity to work in action groups. Details will be announced soon.