



APPALACHIAN FOODSHED PROJECT

Enhancing Food Security by Cultivating Resilient Food Systems and Communities

Goals of the Search Conference:

- **COALITION BUILDING:** Bring people together to enhance local, state, and regional networks and facilitate collaboration to address community food security
- **SEARCHING FOR A “FOOD SECURE COMMUNITY”:** Realize and strengthen our regional identity and regional foodshed
- **BUILD KNOWLEDGE OF CURRENT FOOD SYSTEM ENVIRONMENT.**
- **ACTION PLANNING:** Develop action plans for increased community food security and identify stakeholder roles in implementation

Cultivating Appalachian Food Security

AFP Search Conference

March 15-16, 2012

Pembroke, Virginia

The Search Conference brought together stakeholders, community practitioners, community liaisons, and academics to continue the dialogue on community food security in Appalachia, and to develop specific actions for work in the region.

In March, 2012, 47 participants gathered in Pembroke, Virginia to build on the work begun at the Capacity Building Forum (October 2012). *Cultivating Ap-*

palachian Food Securi-

ty, the Appalachian

Foodshed Project

(AFP) Search Confer-

ence, brought together

stakeholders already

involved in the AFP,

as well as new partici-

pants working as nu-

tritionists, producers,

academics, extension

agents, community organizers, activists,

and emergency food providers. During

the two day conference, participants

learned from one another’s successes and

challenges, and identified specific action

for addressing community food security

in the region.

Mary Emery, of South Dakota State Uni-

versity, returned to Virginia to facilitate

the search conference. To begin the dia-
logue, participants were asked to share
more about their food systems work—why
it was important to them, and its impact



Using a values-based framework, participants collectively framed their work in the context of community food security.

on the community. Using a values-based community security framework,* the small group conversations were then used to help contextualize community food security around the concepts of strong communities, vibrant farms, thriving local farms, resilient ecosystems, healthy people, justice and fairness.

*Based on the Community Food Security Coalition’s “Whole Measures of Community Food Security”



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A collaborative effort of North Carolina State University, Virginia Tech, West Virginia University, and community stakeholders

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- ◆ The Appalachian Foodshed Project is using a **foodshed concept to address issues of food security in West Virginia and the Appalachian regions of North Carolina and Virginia**. Similar to the concept of a watershed, a foodshed takes into account everything between where food is produced and where it is consumed. This includes the farms and gardens used to raise food, travel routes used to transport products, processing facilities, distribution (farmers markets, brokers, retailers), and the restaurants, institutions, and homes where we all eat.
- ◆ The Appalachian Foodshed Project is designed to build on the work that is already happening in Appalachia, facilitating and enhancing formal and informal work by creating **a network of organizations and individuals** who are engaging similar issues related to community development, economic viability, health and nutrition, food access, social justice, and agriculture.
- ◆ By working collaboratively, the Foodshed Project hopes **to build on the human and natural resources in the region** to improve access, expand food security, and enhance food economies, especially in communities that have been underserved and are economically vulnerable.
- ◆ The Foodshed Project will work to **cultivate resilient food systems within the region**. This means creatively working with communities, farmers, policymakers, non-profits, and institutions to better understand the food system and implement changes that have long term benefits for all people in the region.

AFP Search Conference (continued)



Participants made time to socialize and build relationships.

This dialogue created the foundation for the main work of the conference: identifying assets and actions to address food security in the region.

Working in state teams, participants revisited the provocative propositions from the capacity build-

ing forum, and developed action groups for moving the work forward:

North Carolina:

- Accessibility of Local Food
- Education and Engagement
- Policy and Advocacy

Virginia:

- Policy
- Agriculture Infrastructure
- Improving Access and Availability

West Virginia (working in tandem with the Food and Farm Coalition):

- Aggregation and Distribution
- Food Access
- Processing Infrastructure

These groups will be meeting monthly, and reporting back to the regional group in June of 2012. In addition to developing specific action, the AFP hopes to facilitate learning and collaboration across the three state region.

For more information, and additional details from the Search Conference, please contact Nikki D'Adamo-Damery, Project Coordinator: nikkid11@vt.edu or 540-231-22654 or visit www.appalachianfoodshedproject.org.